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LPETE WORKS
OF
SWAMI ABHEDANANDA
PART I



PUBLISHED BY
SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH,
MYLAPORE, MADRAS,
1924



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THE COMPLETE WORKS

OF

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

PART I.



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BY

Swami Abhedananda.

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FOREWORD

NO words are necessary to introduce the author of the present volume to the general readers of religious literature. His vigorous work on behalf of the propagation of the Vedantic lore in the two important Western Continents of America and Europe was spread well over a quarter of a century which earned for him an international reputation and a seat among the noted savants of the countries.

Swami Abhedanandaji is one of the twelve Sannyasin disciples of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, who were encharged by the Master to disseminate his Gospel of harmony and spirituality into the world. After the historic success that the immortal Sri Swami Vivekanandaji, the leader of that little band of young Sannyasins, had attained in America, he sent for two of his brother disciples from Calcutta in 1895—96 to stabilise his Vedantic work in the West. And Swami Abhedanandaji was one of those. From that time to the middle of 1921, with the exception of a short period of a few months of 1906, the Swami spent all these long twenty-five years exclusively in America and Europe in carrying on the message of Vedanta to western peoples. The lectures embodied in the present and other volumes to come are the fruits of that vigorous propaganda work of his. The depth, the scholarship, and the clarity of thought noticeable in these lectures spell at once the great success

that the Swami attained in his mission in the West. These lectures cover the entire field of Vedanta and meet most satisfactorily the issues raised by the study of modern physical science and allied subjects, and as such they must be considered as invaluable to all students of comparative religion and science, and of Vedanta in particular.

Hitherto these lectures were published in costly editions in America whose prices were almost prohibitive for the average reader of this country. So with the kind permission of the Swami, we have arranged to bring out all his precious lectures and writings in two or three volumes of cheaper edition that they can be within the easy reach of all. The present first volume comprises of three series of lectures which were published under the heads of '*Self-Knowledge*,' '*Reincarnation*' and '*Divine Heritage of Man*,' in the American editions, and a few single lectures besides. We hope our readers will derive much benefit by this cheaper edition of the lectures.

Publishers.

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SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

SPIRIT AND MATTER.

"Matter or object is related to spirit or subject : and the subject or spirit is equally related to the object or matter. If there were no object, there would be no subject ; and if there were no subject, there would be no object. For on either side alone nothing could be achieved."

Kaushitaki Upanishad, III, 8.

Spirit and matter have always been subjects for discussion in science, philosophy and religion. The great thinkers of all countries have tried their best to understand the true meanings of these two terms and to establish their mutual relation. The two words have various synonyms, such as ego and non-ego, subject and object, mind and matter. Scientists and philosophers have advanced many theories from time to time to explain their ideas and conceptions about them and have arrived at different conclusions. Some say that spirit or mind or ego is the cause of matter, while others reverse the relation and believe that matter is the cause of spirit or mind or ego. These conclusions have given foundation to the various explanations of the universe, which can be classified under three heads,—the spiritualistic or idealistic, the materialistic, and the monistic theories. The spiritualistic or idealistic theory claims that spirit or mind is the creator of matter and energy, hence of all material objects ;

and it denies the existence of matter as distinct and separate from the mode or condition of spirit or mind. The materialistic theory, on the contrary, maintains that matter produces spirit, mind, ego or subject.

There have been many idealistic or spiritualistic philosophers in different countries at different times. In India, Greece, Germany, and England have arisen a number of idealists like Bishop Berkeley, who have denied the existence of the external world and also of matter as an entity separate from mental ideas. Modern Christian Science, which teaches that there is no such thing as matter but that everything is mind, has been built upon this idealistic doctrine of Bishop Berkeley and other philosophers of the same school. In America it is new, because the nation is new. America has not yet produced any great idealistic philosopher.

The materialistic theory of the universe, on the other hand, is maintained by a large majority of the scientists, physicists, chemists, medical practitioners and the evolutionists of the present time. They try to deduce everything from matter, and claim that it is the cause of mind, ego or spirit. Although there are thousands and millions of people all over the world who advocate this theory and call themselves materialists, still very few can define the term matter and give a clear idea of what they understand by it.

What is matter ? Has anybody ever seen matter ? This question can be asked of the materialists. Do we

see matter ? No. We see color. Is color the same as matter ? No. It is a quality. Where does it exist ? An uneducated man may think that the color of a flower, as perceived, exists in the flower. But the physiologists explain that the color which is perceived does not exist as such in the flower, but that it is a sensation caused by a certain order of vibrations coming in contact with our consciousness through the medium of the optic nerves. This may seem strange, but it is true. The perception of color is a compound effect produced by vibrations of ether, which, entering through the eyes, create another set of vibrations in the brain cells ; and these vibrations, when translated by the conscious entity, are called sensations. Color, therefore, is the result of the blending of the objective and subjective elements. It is the product of the combination of that which comes from the outside world and that which is given by the subjective or mental activities. Thus we can understand that color does not rest in the flower ; but it depends upon the retinæ, optic nerves and brain cells as well, so it cannot be the same as matter.

Similarly we may ask : Is sound which we hear the same as matter ? No. It is the result of a certain kind of vibration plus the conscious activity of the mind. If you go to sleep, the vibration of sound will enter through your ears and be carried through the auditory nerves into the brain cells, but you will not hear it, because the percipient mind is not there to translate the vibration into the sensation of sound. Sound, therefore,

is not the same as matter. In the same manner it can be shown that the other senses do not give us any information about that which we call matter. Then we ask : What is matter ? John Stewart Mill defines matter as the " permanent possibility of sensation," and mind as the " permanent possibility of feeling." Are we better off after hearing this definition ? On the contrary, it is more confusing. The whole difficulty lies in the word " possibility." It means, matter is that which permanently makes sensation possible, and mind or spirit is that which permanently makes feeling possible ; or in other words matter is that which can be permanently felt or perceived, that which is the object of feeling; and spirit is that which can permanently feel or perceive, that which is the subject of feeling.

That which permanently makes sensation possible can never be revealed by the senses, for the senses are no more than open doors for our sensations. All that we can predicate of matter is that it causes sensations. When we try to know its nature *per se*, or any particulars concerning it, our senses do not help us. The eyes are only instrumental in perceiving the sensation of color, the ears of sound, nostrils of odor. Our perception of the external world is limited by these sense powers, and all sensations are either direct or indirect results of our sense activities. Although we know that matter is something which exists in space and time and causes various sensations, still we cannot see or touch it.

That which corresponds to the name "matter" will always remain intangible.

We may touch a chair, a piece of wood or gold, but we cannot touch matter by itself. This is very curious. Gold or stone is not matter, but it is that which is produced by matter. Matter appears as wood or stone.

It may be interesting to know the history of the term matter. This word is derived from the Latin *materies*, meaning "stuff," and it was originally used in the sense of the solid wood of a tree or a timber for building. Gradually a generalized concept was formed which meant anything substantial out of which some other thing was fashioned. When a wooden statue was made, the form was distinguished from the substance wood or *materies*. Here it was still wood. But when a statue was made of stone or metal it was still called *materies*. Thus the name *materies* signified the substance out of which something was shaped or fashioned. Gradually when the question arose, "What was the substance out of which this world was made?" the answer was *materies* or matter. So the word matter does not mean any definite thing. It is used for that unknown substance out of which the known objects of perception are formed. Here ends the literal and real meaning of the term. Matter can be used in the sense of any unknown substance which lies at the bottom or foundation of some form or object. For instance, in our ordinary conversation we use this word in such expressions as "What is the matter?" "It

does not matter," "Important matter," "Decaying matter."

In science and philosophy, however, matter is that unknown substance out of which all phenomenal forms are fashioned. It is beyond sense perception, yet it underlies all the objects of the universe. It is not the same as space or time, but it fills space, manifests itself in time, and cannot be limited by the category of causality. All these ideas are included in the meaning of the term matter. When we think of that substance of which the universe is the appearance, we imagine that it is vast, immense, marvellous and possessed of wonderful powers, which are constantly changing. But what is matter? Is it one or many? It is one. We cannot say that it is many. Herbert Spencer says: "Our conception of matter, reduced to its simplest shape, is that of coexistent positions that offer resistance, as contrasted with our conceptions of space in which the coexistent positions offer no resistance." (First Principles, p. 140.) Let us understand the difference between space and matter. Space is extension offering no resistance, but that which offers resistance and lies in space is matter. He also states: "Of these two inseparable elements, the resistance is primary and the extension is secondary." As, for example, when we touch something it resists, then we have an idea of resistance; but when we spread our hand that feeling of resistance extends also in space. Herbert Spencer says again: "Our experience of force is that out

of which the idea of matter is built up. . . . That which opposes our muscular energy is immediately present to consciousness in the terms of force. Hence forces, standing in a certain correlation in space, form the whole content of matter." Furthermore, he adds : "Matter and motion, as we know them, are differently conditioned manifestations of force. They are the concretes built up from the contents of various mental relations." In order to feel resistance there must be present one who feels ; and then the force that is felt is the primary cause which gives rise to the conception of matter.

Again, matter has not been created by anybody. No one has ever seen, nor can anyone imagine the creation of matter out of nothing or its total annihilation. According to modern science, matter in its true nature is a substance uncreatable and indestructible, that is, it was neither created out of nothing nor can it go back into nothing. There are various other definitions of matter. Some physicists say that matter is "whatever possesses the property of gravitative attraction." But still this does not tell us its true nature. We can only say that there is some substance which responds to attractions. Ernst Haeckel, again, defines matter as "infinitely extended substance, and spirit as all-embracing energy of thought."

After studying these various definitions, we learn that matter is that substance of the universe which makes up the objective world, or that which can be perceived by the senses and cognized by the mind. It is always

objective, and spirit or mind is always subjective, always the perceiver or cognizer of matter, the knower of the object. Now we can understand the difference,—spirit is the perceiver and knower, while matter is that which is perceived, sensed and known. The one is the subject and the other is the object. These two exist in relation to each other. The objective world or matter forms only one-half, while the other half is the subjective world or spirit. Therefore, the materialistic theory, which admits the existence of the object and denies the existence of spirit or mind or the subject, is onesided and imperfect. It ignores the fact that matter or object can only exist as related to the subject.

The materialistic theory is a logical blunder, because it is based upon a confusion between object and subject. It asserts that matter is objective, but at the same time it tries to show that it is also the cause of the subject, which can never be. "A" can never become "non-A." Materialism begins with the idea that matter is objective, and ends in attempting to prove that this objective something has become the subjective mind, spirit or ego. It first takes for granted that matter is that which is perceived, or the cause of sensations, then it gradually claims to show that it produces that which feels the sensations, which is self-contradictory and absurd.

As materialism is onesided and imperfect, so is the spiritualistic or idealistic theory of the world which denies the existence of matter or object, and

says that everything is mind. The theory of modern Christian Science,—that all is mind and that there is no matter, is as erroneous as the materialistic theory. Spirit or mind or ego, which is always the subject, can exist as perceiver or knower so long as there is an object of perception and of knowledge. If we admit the existence of one, that of the other is implied. Therefore, Goethe was correct in saying : “Matter cannot exist and be operative without spirit or spirit without matter.”

The universal substance appears as possessing these two attributes of subject and object, of spirit, mind or ego and matter or non-ego. They are like the two modes of the one eternal substance, which is unknown and unknowable existence. It was called “Substantia” by Spinoza. Herbert Spencer calls it the “Unknowable.” It is the same as “Ding an sich,” or the transcendental thing-in-itself of Kant ; Plato named it the “Good.” It is the “Over-Soul” of Emerson; while in Vedanta it is called “Brahman,” the absolute substance of the universe, the infinite and eternal source of matter and mind, of object and subject. This substance is not many but one. All varieties of phenomena have come out of this one source, Brahman, and into it they will be reduced at the time of dissolution. It is the universal energy, the mother or producer of all forces. We know that all forces are related to one another and that they are, as modern science explains, the manifestations of the same eternal energy or the infinite substance. From this one source

all mental and physical phenomena and material forces have come into existence, and have evolved into various forms and shapes.

This is monism. The monistic thinkers of the present age, like Ernst Haeckel and others, admit this one eternal substance as the source of mind, matter and all forces. They also accept the great truth which has always been taught by Vedānta that "From that infinite substance or Brahman, the Absolute Being, have evolved life-force or Prāna, mind, all the mental activities, and the sense powers, which are included in the meaning of the term "spirit" or subject on the one hand, and, on the other, space or ether, and all gaseous, liquid and solid objects which are understood by matter!" Matter in its simplest state can be reduced to the same infinite substance Brahman, which forms the background of mind or spirit. Therefore, Vedānta teaches that the eternal substance is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe. Although it is one, still it appears as many by its inscrutable power known in Vedānta as "Mâyâ."

This world is not made up of dead matter alone. It is not the product of the combination of those minute particles called atoms. Until lately the western physicists, chemists and other materialists believed that these atoms were indivisible units floating in the infinite space, attracting and repelling one another, mechanically producing the elements of nature and creating the phenomenal world. But now, through the application of electricity, J. J.

Thomson, the great English scientist, has proved that the so-called indivisible atoms can be subdivided into still finer *electrons*, which are nothing but the force-centers of the ancient Hindu scientist. If atoms are made up of electrons, and electrons are but force-centers, where do they exist? They exist in that primordial ocean of infinite substance or Brahman, the receptacle of the eternal energy, which is in turn the mother of all forces. Thus, we can understand how matter and force are related to the one substance or Brahman. The objective side of that substance appears as matter, and the subjective side as spirit.

I have already said that it is a scientific truth that matter is indestructible and uncreatable; so is force. Matter and force can be transformed into various manifestations, but can never be destroyed. Now the question rises: If the one half of the world or objective matter and force be uncreatable and indestructible, then what is the nature of spirit? Is it creatable and destructible? If the objective half of the universe be uncreatable and indestructible, how can the other half, the subjective mind or spirit, be creatable and destructible? That is impossible. Spirit or mind in its simplest form is equally uncreated and indestructible. If matter or object be eternal, then the spirit or subject must also be eternal to make it possible for the object to be eternal. Who will know that matter and force are eternal, if the spirit or subject be not equally eternal? This point has been overlooked by most of the eminent thinkers and

scientists of different countries. The eternality of matter and force or energy presupposes the eternality of spirit or mind. If the one falls, both will disappear. Therefore the ultimate analysis of spirit and matter shows that both are uncreatable, indestructible and eternal. If the one pole of a magnet be eternal, the other pole must necessarily be eternal. Furthermore, the neutral point where both meet must also be eternal. This universe is like a gigantic magnet, one pole of which is matter, and the other is spirit, while the neutral point is the absolute substance. For this reason these three, matter, spirit, and Brahman are eternal.

In Vedanta, spirit is called the Atman, the cognizer, the perceiver and the subject. It is our true Self. It existed in the eternal past and will continue to exist in the eternal future. Nothing can destroy it. The phenomenal world, which is the object of sense perception, may change from one form into another, but the Atman or Self will never change. It is absolutely unchangeable. "Weapons cannot pierce it, water cannot moisten it, fire cannot burn it, nor can the air dry it." It is indissoluble, immutable and immortal substance. It is not destroyed at the time of death. Death is the property of everything within the realm of time and space. All objects that have form are subject to death. Birth is followed by death. That which is born must die. Our body will die because it had its birth and exists in space and time. But the Atman or spirit cannot die, because it was never

born and is beyond space and time. If you try to think of the birth of your spirit, you will never be able to find an absolute beginning ; therefore, Atman is beginningless and endless. Everything which can be perceived by our senses will change and pass away, while the Atman or spirit will remain forever.

Here it may be asked whether spirit is one or many? The same question may be asked of matter. Is matter one or many? We have seen that matter as objective substance is one, although it appears as many on account of its manifestations within space and time. Similarly, says Vedanta, there is one eternal Spirit or Subject of the universe, of which the individual spirits or egos are but so many manifestations. They are but parts of one stupendous whole or universal spirit or God. God is the eternal Subject or Knower of the world. He is the cosmic Ego, the sum-total of all individual spirits or egos and more. He is the one Infinite Being, the eternal ocean, which contains so many eddies or souls. The cosmic Ego or God is the first-born Lord of the universe. He is the first and highest manifestation of the Absolute Substance or Brahman. He is the material and the efficient cause of all phenomena. He is the projector of evolution. He differentiates subject from object, spirit or ego from matter or non-ego. In Him everything exists, through Him all beings live, and into Him they return in the end. He is more powerful than all the individual spirits together. We possess small powers; as our know-

ledge is limited so are our powers; but God is the one substance whose power is unlimited. He dwells everywhere. He forms the background of our individual spirit and possesses eternal knowledge. He is the Soul of our souls. We should meditate on Him and worship Him; then we shall understand the relation between spirit and matter.

“He is the one Eternal Being in the midst of all non-eternal forms and names. He is the one Source of intelligence in the midst of insentient matter. He makes that one substance appear as many and fulfills all desires dwelling within the hearts of all creatures. Whosoever realizes Him in his soul attains to eternal bliss even in this life.”

KNOWLEDGE OF THE SELF.

"The infinite and eternal truth, Brahman, pervades the whole universe, the visible and invisible. If the visible be taken away, (if the perceptible phenomena be destroyed) that which will be left is the infinite". May we realize the Infinite in this life ; may we attain to that truth and enjoy peace forever.

"Peace, peace, peace to all living creatures."

Isha Upanishad.

The knowledge of God is not so commonly spoken of in India as the knowledge of the true Self. Self-knowledge reveals the knowledge of the real nature of the Absolute and of the Supreme Deity. Ordinarily we use the word "self" in the sense of ego, but the term "Self-knowledge" does not mean mere knowledge of the ego. The ego in us is the actor, thinker and perceiver. That which performs all the functions of the body and mind, is generally known as "I" or ego ; but it is only the reflection of the Absolute Brahman, which is the source of all intelligence. The ego is the image of that divine spark within us which gives it vitality and makes it do all works mental and physical. So when we speak of Self-knowledge, we do not mean simply the knowledge of the lower animal self or ego, but also of the higher Self.

The higher Self is the same as the Absolute which lies at the foundation of the phenomenal universe. The

absolute Substance or Brahman is beyond space and time, consequently it is formless and unchangeable. When it manifests itself as an individualized, self-conscious entity, it is known as the ego. It also appears as the object of consciousness, then it is called matter ; the Absolute Being, however, is neither matter nor is it the same as ego. It forms the background of our ego, therefore it is our true Self. When we have realized it, we have known God as well as the relation which the phenomenal universe bears to Him ; and the best method of becoming conscious of this Absolute Being is through the realization of our true Self, or Atman, as it is called in Sanskrit.

Some people think that self-annihilation is the ideal of the Vedanta Philosophy, but it is not so. The true Self, according to Vedanta, can never be destroyed. If self-annihilation were the ideal, then the Self would be subject to change and destruction ; it could not be the same as the Absolute Being. The Vedanta Philosophy, on the contrary, teaches that the true Self is absolutely indestructible and unchangeable. How is it then possible for any one to think of its annihilation ? Destruction of Self is just as impossible as the destruction of the Absolute ; therefore self-annihilation cannot be the highest aim and ideal of life.

Self-knowledge alone helps us to realize the absolute Truth and to attain perfection. It is considered to be the highest wisdom. When Socrates asked the Delphian

Oracle "What is the highest knowledge?" the answer came, " Know thy Self." By the word " self " here is meant not merely the ego, but the true Self. The same knowledge of the real Self has been glorified in India from the most ancient Vedic period. Vedanta, the rationalistic portion of the Vedas, describes the Self-knowledge as the highest ideal of life. If we wish to know God, we must first know our true Self ; we must ask within ourselves who and what we are in reality, where we have come from, and what becomes of us after death ? These questions are of vital importance. Ordinary people cannot solve such problems, their minds are too busy with the affairs of the phenomenal world. But an earnest seeker after Truth, who is discontented with the knowledge of material objects, wishes to go below the surface of phenomenal appearances and does not stop until the ultimate goal, the reality which underlies all phenomena, is discovered. His aim is to find the correct solution of these problems by knowing the true nature of his ego as well as of the universe. He may start with the objective world, but gradually, as he advances step by step and reaches farther and farther in his search after Truth, he comes back in the end to his own Self. Because the true Self is the center of the universe. The phenomenal world, which consists of the objects of sense-perception, may be compared to a grand circle, the circumference of which lies in the gross material forms and the innermost center of which is Atman, the true Self.

The nature of this true Self, according to Vedanta, is infinite. It is neither limited by time nor conditioned by space relations. The Scriptures describe God as the center of the universe, but Vedanta says that Self or Atman is also the center of the universe, and that the true Self is one with Divinity. The moment that we realize the Divine Self within us, we understand that the realm of the same Atman extends to the sun, moon, stars, and even to the most distant planets, the light from which takes hundreds and thousands of years to reach us. Wherever there is existence, whether on the physical or mental plane, there is also the manifestation of this Divine Self. That by which we know the existence of the external world, by which we are conscious of our bodies, senses and mental powers, is our true Self. It is not far from us, yet it is beyond the reach of mind and intellect. The Self is thus described in the fourth verse of the Isha Upanishad : " It (the Self) is beyond all vibration and motion. It is one, and swifter than mind. The senses never reached it, it transcended them all. Though standing still, it overtakes the mind and senses which are running fast. It is the source of all mental activities, sense-powers and the various forces of nature."

Modern science tells us that the whole world is the product of matter and material forces. Matter, again, as we have seen in the first chapter, is nothing but a certain state of motion or vibration of some substance, the true nature of which is unknown and unknowable. Every

particle of the universe is in constant motion or vibration. That which we call heat or light, sound or taste, odor, touch or any object of sense-perception, is nothing but a state of vibration of the same unknown substance. Sir William Crookes says : " At thirty-two vibrations per second, is it shown that we have the first beginning of audible sound, and that sound ceases to be audible when it reaches to something less than thirty-three thousand vibrations in a second. The vibrations of heat and light rays are almost inconceivably more rapid. They are expressed in no fewer than fifteen figures, whilst the vibrations within a single second of the recently discovered radium are expressed in more than nine millions of millions of millions." The whole world consists in the vibration of atoms, or the most minute particles of material substance, but above and beyond all this vibration there exists the Absolute Reality, the true Self, which is the source of knowledge, intelligence and consciousness. It is through this Self that we know that there is such a thing as vibration.

Here the question rises : Who is it that knows that the world is a mass of vibration ? Does vibration know itself ? It cannot. " Motion produces nothing but motion," this is one of the laws of nature which has been confirmed by modern scientists. Motion cannot produce knowledge. Knowledge is something which is not the effect of motion or vibration ; but it is that which enlightens our minds and makes us see and understand that

there is such a thing as motion or vibration. Therefore the Upanishad says : " That which does not vibrate is our true Self." Search within and see where is that which does not vibrate, but which is the Knower of all vibrations and actions.

" It goes faster than mind. " We know that mind is the fastest thing in the world ; thought travels faster than electricity, or any other current that exists on the physical plane. Sir William Crookes reasons that " the thought vibrations which issue from the brain may really have their beginning at a point where it becomes no longer possible to estimate the vibrations which are caused by the most subtle forces of physical nature." Furthermore, he adds : " If we can any way realize the concept of a force which is capable of creating thousands of trillions of vibrations in a second, and if we add to this idea that the velocity of these vibrations is equalled by their rapidity, we see easily enough that thought may put a girdle about the earth in an infinitesimal fraction of time."

We can exchange messages by wireless telegraphy between here and England or any other part of the world, but thought transference is quicker than wireless telegraphy. The mind of a person who is sitting here can go straight into the sun, or beyond the sun into the infinite space where the ordinary force of electricity will not reach perhaps—even there the mind can run in the shortest interval of time. Time exists in mind. What is

time? Time means succession in thought. When one thought rises after another, the interval between them is what we call time, so it is subject to mental activity. That which is swifter than mind is the true Self. Our real Self can go quicker than thought-current and even where mind cannot reach. It travels everywhere. Self or Atman forms the background of the mind, therefore the Self is quicker and faster than the activity of the mind. Mind can go nowhere without depending upon the Self, the Knower. It remains absolutely inactive when it is separated from the Self.

“The senses never reached it, it transcended them all.” The senses cannot reveal it ; sense-powers cannot express the true nature of the Self, because they are limited by time and space, while the Knower of time and space must necessarily be beyond the reach of the senses. When we see the sun, the very sight depends upon self-consciousness ; that is, we must be conscious of the fact that we are seeing something, and that consciousness must depend upon our true Self. The sun will not be seen if our mind and eyes are separated and cut off from Self, the source of knowledge, intelligence and consciousness. Depending upon that source of consciousness and intelligence, our mind works, our senses perform their functions and the body moves. Therefore, the Isha Upanishad continues : “ It (Self) moves and it moves not ; it is far and likewise near. It is inside and also outside of all this.” When the body moves, the source of intelligence, or our true Self,

appears as moving, but in reality it does not move. Where will it go? It cannot go anywhere. When we move a jar from one place to another the space within the jar appears to be moving ; but does the space move in reality ? No. What is it then that moves? We do not know ; the form appears to be moving, but the form again is limitation in space. It may be said, " If space does not move, then the form cannot move." It seems to be like a puzzle, when we try to answer it at every step we meet with insoluble problems.

The whole of life is a mystery. We endeavor to find some explanation by studying nature, but nature puts us into more confusion. Science does not help us ; she takes us up to a certain point and there she leaves us without showing anything beyond, without telling us what to do and where to go. Such is the condition of our relative knowledge. When properly analysed, it appears to be a partial expression of the absolute knowledge, which is the real nature of the true Self. Relative knowledge, however, will not help us in solving the riddles of the universe. If we wish to know the ultimate Truth of the world we must go beyond nature and seek the explanation in the realm of the Absolute. Nature is called in Sanskrit *Mâyâ* ; she deludes us, yet we are living in nature, and our body, senses and mind are parts of nature. The more we study nature, the more we are deluded ; we do not come to any final solution. Scientists have arrived at certain conclusions, which are

like conclusions in which nothing is concluded. Science tells us that the ultimate goal of everything is unknown and unknowable. Here Vedanta comes and advises its students to study not merely nature, but our Self or Atman ; then all confusion will be removed and the Absolute Truth will be reached.

Nature makes us see that the Self moves when the body is in motion, but in reality the Self is immovable. Nature makes us feel that Self is very far from us, but it is the nearest thing that we have, nearer than this body and mind which we consider to be the nearest ; our true Self, however, is in reality the nearest of all. " It dwells in everything as its soul or inner nature, yet it is outside of everything." How can that be? If it dwells inside how can it dwell outside? Space exists inside as well as outside. Take the space within this room, which is confined by its walls. This space appears as inside the room ; but what are the walls, are they separate from space? No ; they exist in and through space, they are nothing but space. The space of the walls limits the space that is inside the room; but does it limit in reality? No. It is outside also. Can we limit the infinite space? By no means. Similarly, if we try to limit our Self by our mind we fail, because mind is not large and strong enough to keep the Self out ; sense-powers cannot limit it ; physical forms can never divide it ; because each one of these exists as related to the Self. The Self or Atman, when properly realized, appears as unlimited and

infinite. We say that we are finite beings, but in reality we are not finite. There is only one Infinite Existence which expresses itself through finite forms. As finite forms, existing in space, cannot live outside of it, so all these various individuals live in and through that infinite space of Reality which is called the Absolute Self.

“He who realizes all beings in the Self, and the Self in all animate and inanimate objects of the universe, never hates anything or any being.”* Hatred proceeds from imperfect relative knowledge, which makes us perceive objects as separate from one another. But when we see our true Self in others, how can we hate another without hating our own Self? It would be impossible for Self to hate Self. As it is impossible to hate our true Self, so it would be impossible to hate the Self of any being. This is one of the results of Self-knowledge, where Self-knowledge is there can remain no feeling of hatred. When hatred is gone, jealousy and all other selfish feelings, which we call wicked, disappear. What remains? The ordinary love, which stands in opposition to hatred, vanishes; but Divine love begins to reign in the heart of the Seer. True love means the expression of oneness. As love for body makes us feel one with the body, so love for the true Self makes us feel one with the true Self; and if we see that Self in others, we cannot help loving them as we love our Self. Now we understand the meaning of “Love thy neighbor as

* Isha Upanishad, verse 6.

thymself." It is not an extraordinary teaching. Vedanta has always taught this truth. People of the western world say that Christ was the only one who ever taught in this way, but they do not know that this is the very foundation of the ethics of Vedanta.

Love means the expression of oneness in thought, word and deed. "Where all beings have become one with the Self, what delusion, what sorrow can there be to him who has once realized this unity?"* Self-knowledge leads to realization of oneness with all beings. When all beings appear as parts of one universal Self, there is neither delusion, nor fear, nor sorrow, because there can exist no other thing outside of Self or Atman for which one can grieve or from which one can suffer. Sorrow and fear arise so long as there is the sense of duality or multiplicity. If all objects of fear and sorrow become one with the all-pervading Divine Self, then fear and sorrow must vanish. But so long as we think of other beings which exist outside of our Self, we cannot avoid grief and suffering which arise on their account. In absolute oneness, however, there cannot remain fear, sorrow, suffering, separation or self-delusion. This is another result of Self-knowledge.

Some people may think that Vedanta teaches us to be selfish, but this is far from true. The self becomes dead; the lower self vanishes, and with its disappearance all selfishness is destroyed. The word " Self " must not be

* Isha Upanishad, verse 7.

taken for lower self or selfishness. It stands for Atman, the higher Self, which is our Divine nature. There is no other expression in English by which we can convey the real meaning of Atman. We shall avoid confusion, therefore, if we use the Sanskrit word "Atman" to express our true Self. Then no one will mistake it for selfishness. "The Atman has pervaded all, effulgent, incorporeal, scatheless, untouched by brain or nerve centers, pure, sinless, a poet (Kavi), wise, omnipresent, self-existent, he has disposed all things aright for eternity."* That Atman (Self), who is the center of the universe, is all-pervading. Wherever our mind goes, the Atman goes there. It is the source of the light of intelligence ; it is pure, spotless, sinless. Here you will notice that Vedanta teaches that we are not born in sin and iniquity, but that our Atman or true Self is sinless. By this it does not encourage us to do sinful acts, but it tells us that the moment one acquires Self-knowledge, from that moment one ceases to do anything wicked. The Atman is in the body, but it has no body. It is formless, that is, beyond gross and subtle forms. There are forms which we cannot see except through the most powerful microscope, even such minutest forms do not affect the Self. It is absolutely beyond all forms ; but at the same time it can appear in any form, and all forms exist in it.

Atman is beyond all nervous activity, or the function of the brain. The materialists maintain that when brain

* Isha Upanishad, verse 8.

and nerve centers vibrate, self-consciousness is produced. But Vedanta contradicts their statement by saying "Beyond the reach of nerve centers and untouched by brain powers." It is not affected by the changes of the body ; there may be variations in the color or form of the physical body, or the body may be diseased or have some part mutilated, but that disease or mutilation, will not produce any change in the true Self or Atman. Therefore, Self-knowledge makes one free from nervousness and other physical ailments.

The word " Kavi " means poet, and also means the seer of things. Self is described as the greatest poet of the universe ; this is one of the most beautiful expressions and attributes that can be given to Divinity—He is the poet, His poetry is the universe. He is also described as the greatest artist. His art we see in the sunrise and sunset. The sun, moon and stars are nothing but the paintings on infinite space by the hand of the Almighty artist.

True Self or Atman is above good and evil, beyond virtue and vice. Some people ask : How can it be above good and evil ? Others say : It is only good. Good and evil, however, are two relative terms ; evil exists in relation to good, and we cannot separate the one from the other. If we wish to take good, we shall have to take evil also. So with virtue and vice ; one cannot exist without being related to the other. The Absolute Self is above all relativity ; therefore, it is above good

and evil, beyond virtue and vice. "There is no other seer than this Atman, no other knower." Who can be the knower of the universe? There is one eternal Knower who knows the existence of all objects, and the knower in us is only a part of that eternal Knower or God. The vast majority of man-kind do not know this great truth ; the preachers do not teach it, because they themselves do not understand it. If God is the Knower of all, then the Knower in us is a part of God. Vedanta tells us to realize the individual knower first; then will the Knower of the universe be known.

The Atman or true Self is never the object of knowledge, but it is always the subject. The cosmic or universal Knower is the same as that which people worship as God. Thus by the light of Vedanta we can see God close to our souls; but in the Scriptures of special religions He is made remote, He is driven far out of our reach. Vedanta brings Him nearer than anything we possess. Although this Atman is all-pervading, yet it is beyond everything; it dwells in all things, still it is not the same as anything. It is never affected by phenomenal conditions. It transcends the changes of nature, yet it permeates nature. It is its own cause; in it cause and effect are identical. The Atman has no cause, yet it is the cause of all; and at the same time it is beyond the law of cause and effect. The Self has existed by itself from the beginningless past and will continue to exist throughout eternity; no one can see its beginning or its end, because

beginning and end refer to time, and our search after them, being within the sphere of mental activity, is also subject to time. We may search for the beginning and end of the phenomenal universe, but as the Atman (Self) is above all thought and beyond time and space, it can have neither end nor beginning.

“It is all-knowing.” All relative knowledge is only a partial expression of that wisdom which constitutes the nature of the Atman. Now we see that the attributes which people generally give to God, such as, He is omniscient, omnipotent, all-pervading, eternal, infinite, are also given by Vedanta to the Atman or true Self. True Self is the Soul of our souls. Self-knowledge reveals that the attributes of God are also the attributes of the Atman. “Those who do not realize this true Self, dwell in the darkness of ignorance and go through the misery and sufferings which exist in that darkness.” They are always fearful and unhappy. They fear death and everything that threatens their earthly existence, and they make their life miserable by attaching themselves to a particular form of manifestation which they are afraid of losing. They love sense-enjoyments and worldly pleasures, they feel disappointed and discontented if they do not find these, and they consider that this earthly life has no other higher aim or ideal. The life of such persons is nothing but a continuous chain of fear and unhappiness. Those who are rich fear loss of fortune ; those who have reputation and high position are afraid of losing them ;

while every man or woman suffers from the fear of disease and death. Do you suppose that these people will ever enjoy true happiness on this earth ? No. They alone are truly happy who have become absolutely free from fear. Perfect happiness comes and all fear is conquered when Self-knowledge is gained. For this reason each one of us ought to make constant efforts to acquire it in this life. The light of Self-knowledge dispels the darkness of ignorance and frees us from fear, sorrow, misery, birth and death, as also from bondage, imperfection and delusion, which proceed from ignorance.

This ignorance is likewise the mother of selfishness. It has the power to veil the Divine and absolute Atman and to make us identify our true Self with the material body. Thus when forced by the inscrutable power of ignorance (Avidyâ) we forget our real Self, think of ourselves as the sons or daughters of mortals, we become finite and subject to such limitations as are understood by the term "selfishness." Self-knowledge destroys ignorance and makes one absolutely unselfish. Blessed is he who lives in the sunshine of Self-knowledge, having risen above the clouds of fear and selfishness which gather in the night of ignorance. What is this world ? It is produced by ignorance and bound by fear. Knowledge of the Self destroys all worldliness, brings spiritual strength and makes one fearless, as God is fearless. Does He fear anything ? How can He ? The moment we realize that God dwells in us, how can we fear ? How can we have

fear of death when we know that death merely means a change from one body into another, and that our true Self or Atman is unchangeable? Those who do not possess Self-knowledge are miserable, and will be born again and again on this plane of ignorance until they have learned to realize their true Self.

Self-knowledge is the only source of happiness ; it will lead to perfection and freedom. You may seek freedom, but how can you obtain it when you have become a slave of fear and earthly conditions? You are a part of Divinity. Feel it, realize it, and all these ties will drop away and you will be free. The attainment of this freedom through Self-knowledge will bring to you the realization of your oneness with Divinity. Then you will be able to say : “ That light which I see in the sun is in me ; and that which is in me is in the sun. I am the Lord of the body, senses and mind, and I am also the Lord of all phenomenal objects.”

“ I am the light of the universe, through me shine the sun, moon, stars and the lightning. I have realized my true Self. I have realized the true Self of the universe and therefore I am one with the Absolute.”

PRANA AND THE SELF.

"May my speech be established in my mind ; may my mind be fixed in my speech. O Divine Word ! Thou hast manifested Thyself in the form of wisdom. Do Thou spread Thy powers through my words. Do not deprive me of the truth. May I always dwell in the truth. My salutations to the fire of wisdom, to the seers of Truth and to the Devas (bright spirits).

" O Divine Word ! be propitious to us ; stay in our spiritual space and be happy. Like the lord of light (the sun) constantly purify our hearts and reveal to our eyes that which is auspicious for us. Do not leave us.

"Peace, Peace, Peace to all living creatures."

Kaushitaki Upanishad.

Since the Vedic period, at least two thousand years before Christ, Self-knowledge has been in India not only the theme of sages and philosophers, but also the highest ideal of kings. Most of the early Hindu monarchs were, indeed, the great spiritual teachers of the country, although they did not belong to the Brâhmin caste. There is a prevailing idea that the Brâhmins were the only teachers of spiritual Truth in the beginning, while the duties of ruling and fighting were confined to the Kshatriya or warrior caste. Yet in the great epic Mahâbhârata it is told that some of the Brâhmins fought battles, commanded the army and showed remarkable powers, courage and ability, though they did not become

rulers of the country. As in the Bhagavad Gitâ we read of Drona and Kripâchârya, who were Brâhmins by birth, yet who became noted generals, served on the battlefield, and were the teachers of the Kshatriyas in military science as it was known at that time. On the other hand, we find in the Upanishads and in the epics that the Kshatriyas were the first teachers of the Brâhmins in higher spiritual truths ; Krishna, Râma, Buddha were all Kshatriyas. The Kshatriyas, being of the warrior caste, were bound by duty to protect the country, govern the nation, fight the enemies and establish the reign of peace, justice and righteousness among the people. They were entitled, however, not only to become soldiers, commanders of the army and to sit on the throne, but likewise to impart Self-knowledge to all sincere and earnest souls.

The Hindu rulers of those early days were not like the monarchs of to-day. They regarded life as something that had a meaning, and for them this early existence was not worth living until that meaning had been realized. Even in that early age these royal seekers after truth felt that those who perform the duties of their daily lives without knowing who they are and what they are in reality, are dwelling in absolute darkness. Therefore, after fulfilling their duties as Kshatriyas and rulers of the country, they still found time enough to devote themselves to the pursuit of Self-knowledge.

There was a great Hindu monarch of ancient India

by name Divodâsa, who lived in Benares. Benares was the Indian Athens of those days. It was the seat of education, and the center of religion, science and philosophy. From prehistoric ages it had been the cradle of oriental civilization and culture. Even at the time of Buddha, five hundred years before Christ, it was the stronghold of Hindu philosophy and religion; and Buddha could not have done anything if he had not been able to convince the learned scholars of Benares. Divodâsa, this famous and powerful ruler of Benares, had a son, who became renowned by defeating his fiercest enemies. It is said that he even conquered the Devas, the mythological gods or bright spirits. In the third chapter of the Kaushitaki Upanishad there is a story which describes how this young prince, Pratardana, by his wonderful courage and prowess conquered all the great ones on the human plane and then came to the abode of the ruler of the Devas.

According to Hindu mythology, Indra, the god of Thunder, became the ruler of the Devas through his righteous works and wisdom. Pratardana, the son of the mighty king Divodâsa, went to the abode of Indra, dwelling in his heaven, with a desire to conquer him. He told how he had destroyed his enemies and vanquished the Devas. Indra was somewhat dismayed at the sight of so great a hero, and did not know how he ought to receive him and what he should do to please him. So, after hearing the description of his powers and

victories, Indra said to Pratardana : “ I am well pleased with thee and wish to give thee a boon. Choose a boon and I will be happy to grant it to thee.” The prince answered: “ Do thou thyself choose that boon for me which thou deemest most beneficial for a man.” He did not know for what to ask, but he knew that there was something which would be most helpful to all. Having in his mind the thought that people who are dwelling in ignorance and self-delusion and who do not understand the true nature of Being, ought to have something that would make their life worth living, he said: “ Grant me that boon which thou thinkest best for a man.” Indra replied: “ That is not right ; thou must choose thine own boon ; no one who chooses, chooses for another.” The prince insisted, saying: “ The boon chosen by me is no boon for me.” He would not choose because he did not know what would be most helpful to mankind, therefore he left it to Indra. Then Indra said to him, “ I am bound by my promise and I must be true to my words, so I must grant thee the highest boon that would be helpful and useful to all mankind.”

“ Know me only ; that is the highest and most helpful for man. Know me, my true Self.” He meant by this, not his powers, not his glory, but his real Self—that which is signified by all such expressions as “ I, me, mine,” and “thou, thee, thine.” He who has known this true Self gains unbounded power. If he commits any wrong, that wrong does not affect him. The knower of

Self is the greatest of all, he is greater than kings, greater than the mightiest emperor ; he possesses all the virtues that are described in the Scriptures of the world and nothing can make him fall from the glory of Self-knowledge. Then Indra praised Self-knowledge by saying : “ I have conquered all the demons, I have destroyed those demons who had three heads, one hundred heads. I have done many cruel deeds, but all these horrible acts could not affect me, because I possess the knowledge of the Supreme Self. Although I have performed many inhuman deeds, yet see my glory, strength, and power ; not a single hair of my head has been injured by them. He who knows me thus is never harmed in his life by any sinful act, neither by theft nor by the murder of his father, mother or a wise Brâhmin. If he is about to commit a terrible sin, the expression of his face does not change.” Thus Indra praised Self-knowledge. He did not mean that the knower of Self should ever perform all such sinful, cruel and inhuman deeds. He wanted to show that the power of Self-knowledge is greater than any other power that exists anywhere in the world ; that it purifies the heart and soul of the worst sinner and washes off the most horrible sins that a human being can commit. The murder of either father, mother, or both, or the revered spiritual master, all these unpardonable sins cannot corrupt the Divine power of Self-knowledge, which purifies the souls of all who possess it.

After praising Self-knowledge, Indra said : “ I am Prâna, know me as Prâna, life. Worship me as the conscious Self, the source of intelligence.” Prâna is the Sanskrit word for life-force ; life and intelligence are inseparable ; wherever there is life, there is intelligence in some form or other. “ Meditate on me as life and intelligence. Life is Prâna, Prâna is life ; life is immortality and immortality is life. Here we must understand that life never dies. Life in itself is immortal and indestructible ; it cannot change. We do not see life growing from less life. Life in the abstract is always the same whether or not it expresses itself outwardly. The expressions may vary, but the life-force is one and unchangeable. When we do not see the manifestation of life we say it is dead ; but life-force does not die. Very few people can understand this. Where life is, death cannot exist. We may say a child is born, a child grows, but the life of the child is not subject to growth ; if it were subject to birth and growth, it would be changeable, it would be mortal. That which we call life-force is free from birth, decay and death ; all these changes take place in the forms through which the immortal life-force manifests itself. We speak of a child or a plant as growing, but from the very beginning the life-force is the same ; the manifestations of some other powers with which life is attended, appear in different ways at various stages of the evolution or growth of the animal or vegetable organism.

“ Prâna is life, life is immortality; as long as the Prâna dwells in the body, so long there is life. By Prâna one obtains immortality in the other world.” If we know what true life is, and feel that we are one with life and inseparable from it, then we can realize that we are immortal, because life does not die, it does not proceed from non-life. If we try to trace the origin of life, going back in imagination as far as we can, we shall never be able to discover as its cause non-life or something dead. Life always proceeds from life. It has existed from the beginningless past, and we cannot think of its ever being subject to death or destruction; therefore it is eternal. But so long as life-force manifests itself through a body, the body appears as living; this is the secondary expression of true life-force. Here we do not think of the life-force or Prâna, but of the form which moves and does certain work. We say, “ He lived so long,” “ His lifetime consisted of so many years, three or four score ;” all these expressions, however, signify the secondary manifestation of Prâna. Life in its primary sense is immortal. When that Prâna or life-force expresses itself, then the organs are alive, the senses perform their functions, the mind thinks, and the intellect acts.

Again this Prâna or life-force is inseparable from intelligence; we cannot separate intelligence from the force which makes everything of the universe move. The Self has two powers, which express themselves as intelligence

and as the activity of Prâna or life-force. Intelligence is that which is the source of consciousness; there is no English term by which we can express it. It is called in Sanskrit "Prajnâ." It cannot be translated as "knowledge," because knowledge means understanding, which is a function of the intellect; but Prajnâ refers to the source of all knowledge and consciousness.

Indra continued : " He who knows me as one with life (Prâna) and intelligence (Prajnâ), as immortal, indestructible and unchangeable, has life to its fullest extent on this earth, and after death resides in heaven and enjoys everlasting life." Here Indra used the word " Prâna" for life-force, but the young prince thought that he must have meant sense-powers, because Prâna is also used to signify the power of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or touching, the power of speech, the powers of seizing, moving, excreting and generating, and that by which all the organs of the body perform their functions. Therefore, he said : " Some say that all the Prânas or sense-powers become one ; for otherwise no one could see, hear, speak, and think at the same time. After having become one, each of the senses perceives separately." Thinking that by Prâna was signified the activities of the sense-organs, he wanted to know which of these was particularly meant by Indra. He maintained that although life or Prâna was one, still the sense-organs performed their functions separately in succession. Two sense-perceptions do not occur at the same moment, there must be a minute interval of

time between them. For instance, when we see a sight and hear a sound apparently at the same time, proper analysis will show that the one sensation is followed by the other ; we cannot have various perceptions simultaneously. According to the psychologists of ancient India, mind perceives the objects of sensation one at a time. When one sense-organ performs its function, others remain quiet ; the interval may be infinitesimally small, we may not grasp it with ordinary attention, still they rise in succession leaving between them a very minute interval of time. So the young prince did not understand what particular sense-activity was referred to by Indra. After raising this question, he kept silence.

Indra replied : “ It is true that all these senses perform their functions at certain intervals and that each one of them is great ; but nevertheless there is another force which is higher than all the sense-powers. That force is pre-eminent among all other powers.” It is not the power of seeing or hearing that makes us alive. Blind and deaf persons do not see and hear, but still they live. The power of speech does not manifest itself in a dumb man, yet he is alive. A man may live having lost the power of smelling, tasting or touching. Infants and idiots live though deprived of the thinking-power of the mind. One may not have memory, still one will be called living. All this shows that that which makes one alive is not the same as the power of seeing, hearing, speaking, smelling, tasting, touching or thinking. Again, a man may lose his arms.

and may not be able to seize anything, still we do not call him dead. The loss of one's legs or other organs of work does not, as we see around us, destroy the life-force or the *Mukhya* (higher) Prâna. Therefore, the life-force is distinct from the power of perception or sense-activity. Yet at the same time these sense-organs will not perform their functions if they are separated from the life-force.

The life-force or *Mukhya* Prâna is something independent of the sense-powers, but the sense-powers are dependent upon life-giving Prâna. Where life-force is unmanifest, the sense-organs may remain perfect, but there will not be any expression of the sense-powers in the form of perception of sensation. The eye of a dead man may be perfect, the optic nerve may be in good condition, the brain cells may be in a normal state, but as the life-force is not working in that body, the sense-organs must remain dead, without performing their functions, without producing any sensation. Thus we can see that all the sense-organs remain active in the body because Prâna, the source of all activity, is there, and because the life-force governs and regulates all the senses. Therefore, in the Vedas it is said: "One should worship Prâna, the life-force, which keeps the universe alive." If you can understand what that life-force is you have understood the secret of the universe as well as that which keeps you alive.

All the scientists, anatomists, and evolutionists are trying to know the nature of that life-force, but have they

succeeded ? No. Some say it is a molecular attraction, others believe that it is the result of physico-chemical forces ; but are they sure of what they say ? What progress has science made in her attempt to find out the source of life-force ? Science has rejected the idea that the life-force is independent of the mechanical forces of nature ; but she cannot tell us definitely the cause of vital energy. There have been debates and discussions on this subject among the scientists of different countries at all times ; still the problem is unsolved. If we can understand the life-force of the universe we have understood the living God ; because, says Vedanta, that life-force is inseparable from the Being who is worshipped as God.

What is God ? He who keeps everything alive, and upon whom depend all other activities, sense-powers and the functions of the gross physical body. Indra said : “ Prâna alone having animated this body makes it rise up. It alone is the conscious Self. What is Prâna is Prajnâ, self-consciousness ; and what is self-consciousness is also Prâna. They both live in the body together and together they pass out of it.” “ That life is the same as our self-consciousness.” Have you seen self-consciousness where there was no life ? It is impossible. Wherever there is self-consciousness there must be life ; self-consciousness and life are inseparable. You may say there is no self-consciousness in trees and plants ; how do you know it is not there ? Is it because they have no brain ? They may not have the same

self-consciousness as that of those who have brain, but they have nerves of their kind. How do you know a sensitive plant does not feel ? All such dogmas of the theologians as that life is granted by the Creator to human beings alone, who would glorify His name, no longer appeal to us. Even the scientists of to-day, like Ernst Haeckel, are beginning to realize that every plant has its soul, that every cell has its own life, that every atom has its soul; and wherever there is soul there is also intelligence, the source of self-consciousness. It may be expressed imperfectly, it may be latent or waiting for proper manifestation ; still wherever there is life there is some kind of intelligence; and wherever there is intelligence there must be life.

As we see in all living creatures, when life is gone, self-consciousness is also gone; so when life is in a state of abeyance, either in faintness or in swoon, when the life-force does not manifest itself in the form of organic functions or sense activities, self-consciousness at that time remains latent. Then Indra said : “ When a man goes into the deep sleep state, where he sees no dream whatever, his mind is absolutely at rest, is enveloped, as it were, with a veil of ignorance.” Sometimes when you wake up after dreamless sleep you feel as though you have come out of a realm of deep ignorance ; in that state of sound sleep do you know what becomes of your sense activities,—the powers of seeing, hearing, smelling ? They remain latent in Prâna, they go back and take

refuge in that life-force. When the life-force remains inactive, then other powers also become inactive. In deep sleep we do not speak, see or smell anything. If there be the noise of a gun right near our ear we do not hear, neither does our mind think or imagine ; all mental and physical powers remain potential, and come out as we wake up. The first awakening is visible in vital actions. In dreamless sleep (Sushupti), however, the life-force is not entirely separated from the central part of the body, because the subconscious activity of the Prâna is then manifested in the heart beat, in the circulation, digestion and in the respiratory process. If that force which causes the motion of the heart and lungs stops, there is absolute separation of the Prâna from the organs, then we do not wake. This is death. But in deep sleep we become one with Prâna, which absorbs all our conscious activities, and in the waking state they all return to their respective organs ; the senses then begin to perceive and perform their functions.

Indra illustrates this by saying : “ And when he awakes, then as from a blazing fire sparks shoot forth in all directions, so the sparks of the various sense-powers proceed each toward its place and come in contact with external objects.” When a spark takes possession of the eye it illumines the object of sight, the form and color ; another spark comes out and falls in the organ of hearing, it then illumines what we call sound. Similarly other sense-powers proceed from Prâna like sparks. The mind itself

is another spark which performs various mental functions.” But “when a person is going to die, being ill and falling into weakness and faintness, all the sense-powers go back to their source ; then people say ‘His mind has departed,’ he cannot hear or see, speak or imagine. Then he becomes one with Prâna alone.” As the Prâna leaves the body it takes with it all the sense-powers, which are dependent upon it. The dying man carries with him the powers of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, seizing, moving, speaking, excreting, generating and the power of thinking as well as self-consciousness. All the vital forces and subconscious activities of the organs are also withdrawn when Prâna leaves the body. Along with these the objects, like color, sound, odor, etc., that are illumined by the senses, are also taken away. When the power of seeing, for example, is drawn away all colors and all forms, which can be perceived by the eye, go with it.

We shall see presently that the objects of the senses are inseparable from these sense-powers ; when the latter are withdrawn, the objects are taken with them. If all the sounds and words which we utter be stopped, then the power of speech will remain latent, and with it will go all the names which can be illumined by the power of speech. For the same reason, when the power of smell is withdrawn, all the perception and sensation of odor accompany it; and all thoughts, percepts, concepts, memory, volition and ideas disappear when mind and

intellect cease to be active. This absolute and completeness with Prâna happens at the time of death. Since Prâna and self-consciousness are inseparable, and since together they live in the body and together they go out of it, a man in this state is said to be dead.

All these organic powers which have been withdrawn with Prâna remain with him after death and he manifests them in another form. As in the state of waking after deep sleep mental and physical forces rise like sparks from a burning fire, so after the sleep of death all the latent powers come out from Prâna, manufacture other organs and perform their functions respectively. What is that force which manufactures the sense-organs ? It is the Prâna or life-force, which contains in a potential form all the desires, impressions and tendencies of the previous existence.

When the activities of the senses, which reveal their objects, become latent, all sensations stop, and consequently ceases the relative existence of sense-objects. The Self is the center of intelligence and consciousness. It is clothed with the Prâna or life-force, a portion of which manifests itself subjectively as sense-powers, while other portions express themselves as objects of sensation. As the objects of perception cannot exist without being related to the perceiving sense-powers or subjects, similarly the subjects only exist as such so long as they are related to the objects.

Here we should remember the truths which we have

already learned : that the sense-powers depend upon Prâna or life-force, that Prâna and self-consciousness are identical, and that objects are related to sensations because they cannot exist as independent of the powers of perception. There will be no color in relation to us if our power of sight be dead. For the same reason that which we call sound only exists in relation to the power of hearing. Similarly it can be shown that the external objects which we perceive are inseparable from our sensations of them, and these in turn depend upon our sense-powers. An object of perception may be compared to a piece of cloth. As a cloth which is made out of threads is identical with the thread (for what is a piece of cloth but threads woven together only?) so an object of perception, being woven together of sensations and sense-powers is identical with them. The threads of sensations and sense-powers, again, are twisted out of the forces of Prâna. The whole universe, therefore, depends upon Prâna or self-consciousness; Self is the center of the universe as well as the center of each one of us. It is the foundation of life, inseparable from Prâna, and the producer of all sense-powers. Indeed, Self is the origin of the phenomenal universe.

Again it is said that this Prâna or self-consciousness is not many, but it is one. The life-force in you is the same as the life-force in me and in others. As life-force is one, so self-consciousness is one. The self-consciousness in you is also the same as it is in me and in all

living creatures. It is one throughout the universe. We can only infer from external signs the nature of self-consciousness in other individuals and compare it with our own.

Self-consciousness lies at the root of all knowledge. For without self-consciousness speech does not make known any word ; we do not perceive it. Without self-consciousness the ear cannot reveal any sound. When our self-consciousness is centered upon one particular object we do not see things which may lie in close contact with our eyes. For instance, when you are looking at something intently on the street, other objects may pass by in front of you, but you do not notice them though your eyes are there. So with sounds, when your mind is concentrated on one particular sound you do not hear other sounds ; a person may be calling, but you do not hear it ; so when your mind is concentrated on any particular thought or idea, you do not see, hear, smell or taste or have any other sensation. In short, without self-consciousness, no thoughts can rise in succession and nothing can be known. Therefore, it is said : “ That which is the real seer we must know ; we must not try to know the speech or the words, we must know the speaker, the Self. Where is the speaker ? Find it out. Who is the seer ? Find it out. Let no man find out what speech is, but let him find out the speaker. Let no man find out what sight is, but let him find out the seer. Let no man find out what sound is,

but let him know the hearer."

Scientists are trying to find out what sound is, but they do not care to know who is the hearer. Vedanta philosophers, on the contrary, go to the bottom of things; they do not care whether or not sound is the vibration of air. In order to become a sound any kind of vibration must be related to our power of hearing; if our power of hearing be withdrawn who will hear the sound? So what is the use of wasting our time in trying to know what sound is? First let us know the true nature of the sense-powers, then their source, and ultimately the Knower of all sense-objects. "Let no man try to find out tastes of food, let him know the knower of tastes. Let no man try to know what pleasure and pain are, let him know the knower of pleasure and pain. Let no man try to discover what joy or happiness is, let him know the knower of joy and happiness. Let no man try to know the thought, let him know the thinker. These objects of perception have reference to Prajnâ or self-consciousness, and the subjects or sense-powers have reference to objects. Objects have relation to subjects, subjects are related to objects; if there were no objects there would be no subjects, and *vice versa*. For on either side alone nothing can be achieved."

Self-consciousness is described by Indra as the center of the wheel of a chariot. This body is the chariot and the outer circumference of the wheel is made up of sense-objects, the spokes are the sense-powers, which reveal

these objects, and the nave, on which the spokes are fixed, is the Prâna, the life-force. Thus the objects are placed on the subjects (spokes) and the subjects on Prâna. The Prâna or life-force, which is inseparable from intelligence and self-consciousness, is imperishable, immortal, and blessed, that is the true Self. True Self is not increased by good acts, or decreased by evil deeds. The sins of the world do not corrupt or change the nature of this true Self. The true Self is neither virtuous nor sinful, but it is always Divine and perfect. Good and evil deeds affect the ego, the doer and actor, and bring in return the results which the ego reaps. We shall have to understand that all good and evil works are dependent upon self-consciousness and life-force or Prâna. The source of consciousness and intelligence is the guardian of the world, the producer of all phenomena of the universe, and that is " my true Self. "

" And this Self-knowledge will help all humanity in the path of immortality and perfection, which leads to the abode of peace and happiness."

SEARCH AFTER THE SELF.

" May all the functions of our minds, works of our bodies and activities of our senses please the Almighty Brahman, who is described in the Vedanta; may we not forget Him; may we realize His presence in us; may we not be forsaken by Him; may all Divine qualities adorn our souls and bring peace to our minds.

"Peace, Peace, Peace be unto us all."

Chândogya Upanishad.

The ancient mythology of the Hindus, which resembles in many respects Greek mythology, describes how gods and demons took human forms and lived like human beings on this earth. Even in the earliest Upanishads we find accounts of such Devas (gods) and Asuras (demons) living together and fighting. It is told that the first-born Lord of the universe, Prajâpati, once said to the gods and demons : " Why are you fighting for power and supremacy ? The knowledge of the Self alone brings peace to the knower. The Self or Atman is sinless, free from old age and death, sorrow and suffering, hunger and thirst. Its desires are true and never unfulfilled; and its thoughts are always true. This Self must be sought after by all. Whosoever realizes the Self obtains whatever he wishes, his desires are fulfilled, all powers come to him, and he becomes master of all worlds

and of all the realms that exist on this earth as well as in the heavens."

The gods and demons, who were ambitious and unhappy, thought after hearing this that it was a very easy thing then to become lord of the world and master of everything. Here begins the story, given in the Chândogya Upanishad, one of the oldest and most authentic writings on Vedanta. It belongs to the Sâma-Veda, that portion of the Vedas which laid the foundation of the science of music in India. The scale of seven notes was first used in the hymns of the Sâma-Veda, which were put into music and chanted or sung during religious rites and sacrifices. The narrative tells that the gods and demons, being thus instructed by Prajâpati the first-born Lord of all creatures, were awakened to a desire to attain Self-knowledge. They inquired among themselves how they could gain that knowledge, which would make them the most powerful of all beings, and they were determined to search for that Self (Atman), by knowing which all worlds and all desires are obtained.

Here we should understand that demons are not evil spirits, but they are like human beings, strongly attached to the pleasures of the sense-world. They know nothing of the higher ideals of life, they are materialistic in their views, and think that the body is all in all, and that everything is finished with the death of the body. They wish to rule over the whole universe, and their desires are never satiated ; they always want more and more,

and struggle constantly for power and strength. Human beings with such tendencies are described in the Vedas as Asuras or demons; while Devas, or gods, are those who are spiritual, righteous, self-sacrificing, who do not consider earthly enjoyments and worldly pleasures to be the final aim of life, and whose ideal is to gain spiritual strength and spiritual power and to realize the Absolute Truth.

These Devas and Asuras thought that if they could send their leaders to some seer of Truth, then from them they could gather Self-knowledge. So the gods and demons went to their respective leaders, Indra and Virochana, and requested them to go in search after Self-knowledge. Although they had all the pleasures and comforts of life and whatever human beings could wish for ; although they possessed all psychic powers, property, wealth, luxury, and could get everything they desired, still they were not satisfied. They coveted more strength, more power, and when they heard from Prajâpati that there was something through which they could really become masters of the whole universe they longed for it and were anxious to obtain it immediately.

Indra and Virochana, the rulers of the Devas and Asuras, set out separately to seek for a knower of Absolute Truth, who had realized the Self and who could impart his knowledge to others. They gave up their luxuries and pleasures, left their fine raiment and other possessions behind. With modesty and simplicity of

manner, the two leaders, without communicating with each other, sought out the greatest of all the knowers of Self, and approached him with offerings in their hands in accordance with the custom of the country, for in India people do not visit a temple, king or spiritual teacher (Guru) empty-handed. So they took fuel, butter, fruit with them, and with due reverence offered these to him, regarding him as their spiritual master. Having received his permission, they became his pupils and lived the life of purity and righteousness like Brahmachârin, or students, for thirty-two years, always serving him and obeying his wishes. One day this holy master asked them why they had come to him and what they wanted. They replied : “ We have heard from Prajâpati, the Lord of all creatures, that Self-knowledge can make one extremely happy and bring all powers and all objects of desire to the knower ; that the real Self is free from sin and old age, unborn and deathless, unaffected by hunger and thirst ; that its desires are ever fulfilled and its thoughts are true and perfect. This Self must be searched after and realized. We have come to thee, O Lord, to acquire Self-knowledge.”

The great master, wishing to examine whether the understanding of these pupils was purified or not, did not instruct them in the highest Truth at the outset, but gave some suggestions, by which they could search out and discover the real Self that dwells within all. The best teacher is he who directs his students step by step

in the path of realization and who makes them investigate the Truth by their own exertion. So the Divine master who was Prajâpati himself in the form of a Guru, said to them: "The person that is seen in the eye is the real Self (Atman). He is free from sin, sorrow, suffering, and birth; immortal and fearless. By knowing him one can obtain all worlds and all desires." Hearing this the minds of the pupils were confused. They could not understand what the master meant by the expression, "The person that is seen in the eye is the Atman, the true Self." They thought that he must mean the shadow that is seen in the pupil of the eye. When we look at a person's eye we see in it the image of a small figure, the reflection of ourself; the master, however, did not mean that. He referred to the real agent of seeing, the ruler of all the senses, who is seen through the senses by the pure-hearted Yogis alone. Thus misunderstanding the true meaning, the disciples asked: "Bhagavan, who is that which is seen in a mirror and perceived in the water? Is he the same person as the one who is seen in the eye?" The master, knowing that his pupils had not understood the true spirit, replied: "That real Self indeed is seen in all these. Know it and realize it." Furthermore, to test his pupils' power of understanding, he continued: "Go and look at yourselves in a bowl of water, and whatever you do not understand about the Self come and tell me." The obedient pupils went and looked in the water, and seeing the reflection of their bodies they came back and

said : "Yes, sir, we have seen what you meant." The master asked : "Have you seen the Self or what?" The disciples answered : "We have seen ourselves altogether from head to foot, a perfect picture even to the hair and nails. In order to bring them out of this confusion the master said: "After having your hair and nails cut, put on your best garments, adorn yourselves with ornaments and look again in the bowl of water." Following his instructions, they cleaned themselves, and wearing beautiful dresses and rich ornaments, they looked at their own reflection in the water. The spiritual master then asked : "Do you see the Self?" They said : "Revered sir, we see ourselves just as we are now, clean, well-dressed and well-adorned." The master replied : "That is the Self, the immortal Atman, which is free from fear and sorrow. Know it and realize it." The disciples went away satisfied in their hearts. Prajâpati, seeing them at a distance, cried out : "You have departed without acquiring the knowledge of the true Self ; whoever among you, whether gods or demons, will follow this doctrine will perish." But Indra and Virochana paid no heed to his words. They thought that they had realized the Self and went home feeling content.

Now Virochana, who had understood that the body was the Self, went to the Asuras, the demons, and preached the doctrine which he had learned. He taught them the most materialistic ideas, like those of the atheists and agnostics,—“The body is the Self ; the

body alone is to be worshipped and served. By glorifying the self and serving the body one becomes master of the worlds and obtains everything." The demons, following his instructions, became absolutely materialistic in their views and began to decorate and worship their gross physical forms.

Even in the present age many such demons are to be found in this world. Those who uphold atheistic, agnostic and selfish doctrines possess demoniac tendencies. They care for nothing but their own bodies and do not feel for others. They are not charitable, neither do they give alms to the poor. They have no faith in anything higher than their own material form. The demons of to-day offer no sacrifice to God. They decorate the body of the living or of the dead with flowers, perfumes, ornaments, and fine raiment, and vainly imagine that by thus worshipping the body they will conquer the worlds.

The lord of the Devas, Indra, however, had better sense than the ruler of the demons ; he went home, but he hesitated to preach before the gods. Remembering what the Lord of all creatures had described, that " the Atman or Self must be free from hunger, thirst, birth, death and sorrow, that it is immortal and fearless," he said to himself : " This body cannot be the true Self, because it is subject to hunger and thirst, and is not free from any of these imperfections. How could the master have meant by true Self the shadow of this body, when

the body is subject to birth, disease and death? I see no good result from this doctrine." Thus dissatisfied Indra determined to return to his master as a pupil with offerings in his hand. When he came again the master said to him : " You went away with Virochana satisfied in your mind that you had learned the truth and gained the knowledge of the Self ; for what purpose have you returned? " Indra replied : " Bhagavan, how can the shadow of the body be the true Self when it goes through constant changes? If the body is well-decorated with flowers and beautiful costumes the Self (shadow) has a different appearance. If one loses one's eyes the shadow (the Self) will look as though blind, that Self (shadow) will be lame if the body is lame, crippled if the body is crippled, and will perish with the death of the body. Therefore, that changeable shadow cannot be the unchangeable Self. I do not see any good result from such a doctrine. Please explain my difficulty and make me understand the true Self." The master replied : " O Indra, so it is indeed. I shall explain to you the true Self. Live with me as my disciple for another thirty-two years."

Indra lived with his master and served him for another thirty-two years. One day the master, being pleased with the purity, chastity and devotion of his pupil, instructed him thus : " That which enjoys all dreams during sleep is the true Self. It is the immortal and fearless Brahman (the Absolute). Know it, realize it, and be

conscious of it." Hearing this, Indra went home satisfied in his heart. But before speaking to the Devas he found another difficulty. He understood, the Self (Atman) which enjoys dreams is not the same as the shadow of the body, it is not affected by physical changes. It is true that this Self is not blind when the body is blind, or lame when the body is lame, nor is it injured if the body be injured ; but how can the seer of dreams be immortal when it is subject to change and fear, and suffers pain in unpleasant dreams? Thus thinking, he said : " I do not see good in this doctrine ; I must go again and ask my master concerning this perplexity." Indra went to Prajâpati, his spiritual teacher, the third time and questioned him thus : " How could that changeable seer of dreams be the true Self, which is unchangeable, immortal, free from sin, hunger, sorrow, suffering, birth, and death?" The master replied : " O Indra, you are right. I will explain to you again, stay with me another thirty-two years."

At the end of that time the master said : " In sound sleep that which enjoys perfect rest and sees no dreams is the true Self or Atman, which is immortal." Indra thought, how can that be the immortal Self, which is not conscious of itself or of anything else ? No knowledge or consciousness remains in this state. Everything is destroyed then. Did the master mean by Self the destruction of all thoughts, feelings, sensation, consciousness and knowledge ? In deep sleep state we have

neither feelings, nor dreams, nor sensations, nor consciousness of the body or of the external world. He could not understand how that state of annihilation could be the true Self, so he came back and asked the question : "Bhagavan, dost thou mean that true Self is the state of absolute annihilation of consciousness, knowledge, sensation and feelings?" The master answered : "No, that is not true Self." Here we should notice how the great spiritual master gradually directs the mind of the disciple from the gross physical body through the abstract to the Absolute. True Self is the Absolute beyond all comprehension. If we start from this state of dreamless sleep, rising above all feelings, thoughts and sensations, and if we can go still further we shall find our true Self. Now the master was extremely gratified to see his return and said : "Your understanding is profound ; I will explain to you what true Self is. Live with me for another five years and no more."

At the end of the last five years the master imparted the highest knowledge to his faithful pupil : "This gross physical body cannot be the Self, it is subject to death, in fact, it is constantly attacked by death." The life of the body is nothing but a series of deaths or changes. Every particle of the body is continually changing, and if that change stops for a second the body will live no more. "By death this body is perpetually attacked ; death is always working in the body." The word "body" here includes all the sense-organs. The organs of the senses

are also subject to similar changes, consequently they are dying at every moment. "The body is the abode or instrument of the Self, which is immortal and without body." Through this instrument the Self or Atman comes in contact with the gross material world. If the true Self does not manufacture the body it cannot come in direct touch with the objects of the senses. The body, therefore, exists for the enjoyment of the Self; it is the medium with which the Self being identified, it thinks "I am the body" and experiences heat and cold, pleasure and pain. But the ruler of this body is the Self, while the body is its abode.

The real agent that perceives through the senses is the true Self within us. Sensations are produced by the contact of material objects with the sense-organs. The gross objects, having forms, cannot directly come in close contact with the Self unless it manifests itself through the physical form of the body. But formless is the true nature of the Self, who is the knower of this body, the enjoyer of sensations, the doer of all actions. "The Self," said the master, "has no particular form." It dwells within the body without having any special shape. We should bear in mind that our true Self is formless, although our body is with form; then we should understand that the changes of the body do not affect the Self. Since the Self is formless, how can it be the same as the shadow of the body? The lord of the demons, having his intellect covered with *Tamas*,

the darkness of ignorance, and having an impure mind and an imperfect understanding, could not grasp the true meaning of the Self. The master waited for him to ask further questions, but as he went away satisfied in his heart that he had learned everything regarding the Self, Prajâpati was not anxious to force upon him his knowledge of the Absolute Self or Atman, which he was utterly incapable of receiving. Virochana, therefore, did not acquire the knowledge of the true Self, which is formless and immortal.

All the organs of the senses, all sensations, in fact everything connected with the body, is transitory; if we can realize this we can know that the immortal Self cannot be one with the body. This formless Self dwells in the body for a time, and after leaving it remains formless. "So long as the Self (Atman) lives in the body and is identified with it, it is not free from pleasure and pain, but he who knows the Self as separate from the physical abode, is untouched by pleasure and pain." It may be asked, How can the formless Atman manifest itself through the body which has a form? Wind has no form, steam has no particular form, electricity is formless, but still they appear through forms. When the wind blows, although it is formless, it comes in direct contact with objects with form, and shows its form and power by moving them; so, also, steam is without form, but think how it manifests its gigantic force through engines and locomotives. The atmosphere is filled with electri-

city, which is imperceptible to our eyes and senses, yet it takes various forms, such as lightning and thunder. We do not feel the presence of atmospheric electricity ; it required a Marconi to make us realize the value and importance of this invisible current in the atmosphere. The forces of nature are always invisible and formless. No one has ever seen or touched a force *per se*. Its existence can only be inferred by seeing its manifestation through forms. As all the imperceptible forces can be perceived by the senses under certain conditions, so the Atman or true Self, although imperceptible by nature, manifests its power and intelligence through the form of the physical body. How can we know the power of thinking except by its manifestation as thoughts ? In the same manner the existence of the powers of seeing and feeling is inferred from their expressions. If the sight remains unmanifested in a man we call him blind; and he is known as an idiot whose mental and intellectual powers have become latent; but when the expression of these powers begins we see their outward effects. No one could have inferred what powers exist in the Atman if the true Self had not manifested through the body the powers of seeing, smelling, tasting, touching moving, seizing, thinking, feeling, etc. They proceed from the Atman, the self-intelligent center within us. In the state of ignorance these faculties of the soul appear as produced by the body, which is mistaken for the Self ; but when the light of Self-knowledge begins to shine the

Atman reveals itself in its true nature as separate from the body and possessing all powers and intelligence. As an ignoramus cannot distinguish the wind, clouds and electricity from etherial space, so a self-deluded soul cannot distinguish the true Self from the material organism. He who possesses Self-knowledge, realizes that the Atman is the Highest Being (Purusha). He is always happy, enjoying the play of life's sports under all conditions and never thinking of the material body, which is the mere abode of the intelligent Self.

The true Self, as we have already seen, possesses Prajnâ, intelligence, and Prâna, activity, these two will be found at the foundation of the phenomenal universe. When these are latent or potential there is no evolution. Vibrations of all kinds, cosmic or molecular, and all kinds of motion are but the expressions of the activity of Prâna. Intelligence is manifested by human beings, as also by lower animals, the difference being only in degree and not in kind of manifestation. Wherever intelligence, life-force or any kind of activity is to be found, there is the expression of the Self. No knowledge is possible without self-consciousness. First we must know ourselves before we can know anything. We may not know our real Self on account of imperfect understanding, still we possess some kind of self-consciousness. In Vedanta these two, intelligence and Prâna, are described as the ultimate generalizations of all phenomena of the universe and they proceed from the Cosmic Self or Brahman,

which is the source of all knowledge and of the activity of mind and senses.

Indra said : “ The Self is the greatest Being in the universe.” When properly understood we cannot separate this Atman or true Self from the universal or Cosmic Being, because there exists only one ocean of the absolute Being or substance which is called by various names, such as God, Brahman, Atman, Self. When that absolute Being expresses itself through our forms it becomes our true Self, the source of mental and physical activity, as well as of intelligence and consciousness. All desires are certain forms of mental activity ; they could neither rise nor exist if the self-conscious entity were not at the foundation of all activities. He who has acquired Self-knowledge can live in the world performing all kinds of works, enjoying all pleasures, but at the same time without being affected or disturbed by any unpleasant condition of this world. The knowledge of Self protects the soul from being agitated by phenomenal changes. “ As a horse, being yoked to a carriage makes it move, so this conscious Self, being attached to the chariot of the body, makes it perform its functions by the power of Prâna and intelligence.” Or we may compare the body to an automobile, the propelling power of which proceeds from the true Self. If the Self be separated or disconnected from the organs of the senses the eyes will see no sight, the ears will hear no sound, the nose will smell no odor, the tongue will taste nothing, the hands

and feet will perform no work. Indra continued : "The eye itself is only an instrument, the seer is behind the pupil of the eye. The real seer and knower of sight is the true Self. The nose is the instrument, but the knower of smell is the true Self. The tongue is the instrument of speech, but the knower of speech is the conscious Self ; the ear is the instrument of hearing, but he who hears is the true Self. He who thinks is the true Self, and the mind is his spiritual eye. Through this spiritual or divine eye the Self or Atman sees all pleasures and rejoices." The mind, intellect, heart, are the instruments of the true Self, which is the knower of all mental activities.

" The Devas who are in the highest heaven, worship and meditate upon this Self; therefore, all worlds belong to them and they have obtained the fulfilment of all desires. He who knows this Self and realizes it obtains all worlds and all desires." He who possesses Self-knowledge is the master of the world and lord of everything, like the gods of the highest heaven. In him all desires are fulfilled. He no longer desires anything of the world, nor does he seek happiness from outside. He possesses all powers ; in short, he is omnipotent, omniscient and ever blissful. Thus the great master explained the mystery of the true Self; and the earnest, sincere and pure-hearted disciple realized it through his blessing. Indra served Prajâpati one hundred and one years, as it is said in the story. This shows that knowledge of the true

Self cannot be easily acquired. Patience, perseverance, and earnest and sincere longing are the steps toward the attainment of Self-knowledge.

Indra became happy, and with gratitude in heart and salutations to his Divine master, he went home and gave the fruit of his hard labor to the Devas. All of them followed his directions, realized the Self and became masters of the worlds. Such is the power and greatness of Self-knowledge.

REALIZATION OF THE SELF.

"May the Divine Self protect the teacher and the student. May he feed our souls with the nectar of eternal Truth. May he grant us spiritual strength. May our studies bring the realization of the Absolute !

"Peace, Peace, Peace be unto us and to all living creatures."

Kena Upanishad.

A seeker after Self-knowledge, having performed all the duties of his life, discovered that the performance of duty could not bring peace to his mind. He had worshipped all the Devas or bright spirits, and had served the gods, but he had not received the knowledge of his real Self. Nor had he found satisfaction, although he had spent most of his time in devotion to the Supreme. Thus learning that happiness, peace and knowledge cannot be obtained from sense-objects or from earthly relations, and realizing the ephemeral character of the phenomenal world, he could no longer remain content with the pleasures of a worldly life, so he renounced all his attachment to earthly things.

He also gave up all studies, because he had discovered that the reading of the Scriptures could not give Self-knowledge or absolute happiness ; for books and Scriptures simply remind us of the higher truths, but they

cannot bring the highest Truth within the reach of our soul. Those who think that spiritual realization will come from the study of the Scriptures and sacred books are mistaken. The Scriptures describe certain spiritual truths, such as the existence of God, Divine Love, salvation, but by squeezing the pages of the book no one can gain the realization of these truths any more than one can get a drop of water by squeezing the pages of the almanac, in which the annual rainfall is mentioned. Before we can comprehend the spirit of any Scriptural text we shall have to realize the truth described in it.

This seeker after Self-knowledge, therefore, abandoned all studies, and went to a spiritual teacher who had known the Self. He approached him like a humble pupil, longing to acquire Self-knowledge. He had no other desire; he did not care to go to heaven or to enjoy celestial pleasures; his sole aim and ideal in life was to know the true nature of the Self. Nothing else could please him or make him happy; his heart was longing for that nectar of wisdom which flows in the soul of a knower of the Atman. Though he had come to understand that the physical body was not all in all, that the mind, the director of the senses, was not the unchangeable Reality, but was subject to constant change, yet his thirst for knowledge was unquenched. Now he was eager to search after that unchangeable and absolute Truth, which is the Soul of our souls and the Ruler of all. Having bowed his head with deep reverence at the

feet of the great spiritual teacher, the pupil asked : "Revered Sir, who is it that governs the mind, and by what power is the mind directed to perform its functions? What force guides the Prâna and the sense-powers? Why is it that we are so active, what is the cause of our activity? Who is this speaker of words ? Who is the seer of sights? Who is the hearer of sounds? What power controls the organs of sight, hearing, and the other senses?"

With this inquiry begins the Kena Upanishad, which had been handed down through memory for generations before the art of writing was known in India. It shows how old and sublime are the teachings of Vedanta. Think of the antiquity and the deep meaning of these questions ! We know that our mind is constantly active; new thoughts and ideas are rising and going down. Mind wanders from here to there; sometimes it is in England, or in India, sometimes it runs to the sun, moon, stars or other planets; hence the seeker after Self-knowledge asked : "Who is the director of this constant activity of the mind ?" The master answered : " That which is the hearer of hearing, the thinker of thoughts, the speaker of words, the mover of all activities of the sense-organs, the seer of sights." Let us understand the meaning of "That which is the hearer of hearing." First of all we must inquire, What is meant by hearing? Hearing signifies that power by which we perceive the existence of what we call sound, or in other words, that

organic activity which illumines [the vibration of sound; so the hearer of hearing refers to the illuminator of the power of hearing, without which no sound can be heard. The spirit of the master's reply was, The director of the mind is that which illuminates the powers of hearing, seeing, thinking, and of speech, as well as the knower of all the activities of our sense-organs.

The power of seeing, again, means that organic function by which the object of sight is illuminated or made known to us. The organ of sight, however, has not the power to produce consciousness or intelligence. The power of seeing exists so long as there is Self-consciousness behind it. The organs of vision, as the eye, the retina, the optic nerve, the brain cells, together with all their activities, do not produce the consciousness of color or the object of vision. In a dead person all these organs may be in a perfect condition, but the perception of sight or the sensation of color will not be felt by the body. The body itself has not the power to see or perceive any external object. Thus by analyzing our perceptions we can understand that the activities of the sense-organs are unconscious by nature. The conscious Self which illumines the organic functions is the seer of sights, the hearer of sounds, and the knower of all sensations. It is also the thinker of thoughts within us. That intelligent Self, which is the source of consciousness and knowledge, must be known as the director of the mind and senses. When we have realized the cause of self-consciousness,

we have understood the power which directs the mind.

According to Vedanta, mind is "finer matter in vibration." The vibration of the mind substance produces perceptions and sensations, and reveals things which cannot be revealed by vibrations of grosser matter. The functions of the mind are nothing but the vibrations of the finer particles of the etherial substance called in Sanskrit *Sattwa*. But the vibration of this substance does not produce intelligence or consciousness. It is insentient by nature. The mind substance appears as intelligent when it is in close contact with the conscious Self or Atman, just as a piece of iron, having absorbed the heat of a furnace, appears as red-hot and is able to burn. The conscious Self may be compared to a magnet which attracts the iron of the mind substance. When a piece of iron, being attracted by a magnet, moves, that motion is not natural with the iron, but is caused by its proximity and close contact with the magnet. As the very presence of the magnet produces activity in the iron, so the very presence of the Self (Atman) creates the activity of the mind substance ; but the Self is not confined within the limits of the mind substance, because the true Self is beyond all relations of space and time.

The master continued : "Knowing this Self, the wise, being freed from this world, become immortal." Those who have known that source of intelligence, the true Self, attain to immortality, but those who have not known it remain attached to the material body and senses,

and are therefore subject to birth and death. This is one of the results of Self-knowledge,—knowing our true Self we become immortal. Although the true nature of the soul, according to Vedanta, is immortal, and immortality is our birthright, still we do not attain it until we have become conscious of our immortal Self. So long as we think that we are mortal we have fear of death. When the consciousness of the immortal Self is gained all fear vanishes. Fear of death rises from ignorance, which makes us forget our immortal nature and identify ourselves with the material body, which is subject to death. Thus, becoming one with the mortal body, we begin to fear death and suffer from anxiety and misery. How can we expect to be free from fear of death when we have identified our Self with the body, which will surely die ? This fear, however, ceases to trouble him who has realized that the body is like a shell, a house, or a receptacle of the soul, which is deathless by nature. The soul manufactures the physical body in order to fulfil certain desires and purposes of life. He who has known this truth has risen above all fear. Therefore, it is said : “ Those who have obtained the knowledge of the real Self are called the wise, and after the death of the body they transcend the realm of birth and death. This is the greatest object to be achieved in this world of relativity.

We have come here to fulfil a certain purpose. At present we may think that the highest purpose of earthly life is to gain material prosperity, success in business,

fulfilment of ambition and sense desires ; but the time is sure to come when we shall realize that all these are momentary, that the real purpose of life is much higher and more permanent. It is very difficult to understand the true purpose of life. Few people in this world have found a perfect standard by which they can measure correctly whether or not they have fulfilled that purpose. Each one of us will have to find out what is the highest ideal of life. It is the attainment of Self-knowledge.

Self-knowledge brings to the soul absolute freedom. It is by Self-knowledge that we can obtain everything we desire. In this world there is nothing higher than the knowledge of the true Self. The knowledge which we now possess is imperfect, it is only a partial expression of the all-knowing nature of the Divine Self. That imperfection is due to the limitations or imperfect conditions of the Buddhi or intellect which reflects the Divine wisdom. But when the limitations are removed and the intellect is purified true and perfect wisdom begins to shine within. If the mirror be covered with mud, it will not have the power to reflect the light of the sun; so when the mirror of the intellect or Buddhi is covered with the mud of worldliness, it does not reflect the light of wisdom which emanates from Atman the Divine Sun. In order to learn this truth and the method by which our intellect and heart may be purified we need the help of a Guru or spiritual master. Knowledge is one, not many. The same knowledge which we now possess will be the highest

knowledge when it will reveal our immortal Self. Therefore, the wise men who know the true Self, attain to immortality even during this lifetime.

The pupil desired to see that Self, which is the director of the mind and the seer of the sight, and by knowing which one becomes immortal. The master said : " The power of seeing cannot reveal the Self." The disciple thought : " If the eye cannot reveal the Self its nature may be described." To this the teacher replied : " Words fail to describe it ; the mind cannot reach it. We cannot know it by mind, intellect or understanding, how can any one teach it ?" The Self is the thinker of thoughts. Mind can only think when directed by the Self who is beyond all thoughts. The very act of thinking presupposes self-consciousness, and all thoughts are only possible through self-consciousness ; therefore, that which is above and beyond all thoughts cannot be revealed by the mind or intellect. When the mind cannot think of it how is it possible for the eye to see the true Self ? The power of sight can reveal that which is in relation to our eyesight. The true Self can never be brought within the reach of sense-perceptions. The master continued : " It is far from the known and also it is above the unknown. Thus we have heard from the ancient sages who taught us this." From ancient times the great seers of Truth have declared that the real Self is neither known nor knowable, and yet it is neither unknown nor unknowable. Ordinarily we say, " We know a thing, " " the knowledge

of this book," etc. In this sense the Atman can never be known or made an object of knowledge.

Let us understand this clearly. When we speak of knowing a thing we mean relative knowledge by intellect ; and we convey the same idea when we say "we do not know a thing." Again, intellect can reveal those things which are related to the senses or are subject to sense-perception. It is more or less dependent upon sense-powers ; consequently its sphere is very limited, for the senses can reach only within a small circle. For instance, we hear sound through our ears. The sound is audible within a certain degree of vibration ; if the vibration of air be above or below that scale we cannot hear ; although there may be a tremendous noise, still our ears are deaf to it. The same may be said of the eye ; the range of sight is equally narrow. Now we can see how very limited that intellect must be which depends upon these powers of perception. Therefore, that intellectual knowledge, which is related to sense-perceptions, is secondary knowledge ; it cannot reveal the Self ; hence it is said that the "Self is far from the known." Furthermore, when we say " we do not know this thing " we mean that we are conscious of our ignorance, we have the knowledge of the fact that we do not understand it or know it by intellect. This ignorance is nothing but the lack of the intellectual apprehension of the thing, which we have called secondary knowledge. It is, however, revealed to us by another knowledge which does not depend upon intellect or upon

sense-perception. That apperception by which we know that we do not know this thing proceeds from the Self. Therefore, the Self is neither known nor unknown, but beyond relative knowledge and ignorance. "We have heard it from our great masters which passed away before us." Although this Upanishad of the Sâma Veda is very old, still the teacher here refers to the authority of other seers of Truth who preceded him and from whom Self-knowledge had been handed down through generations.

The master said : "That which cannot be expressed by speech, but which is the speaker and director of speech, that alone know as the highest Self (the Brahman); not that which people worship here." Every attribute that we give to God is not His attribute in reality. We call Him good, but He is not merely good; strictly speaking, He is beyond good and evil. We project our idea of good, mentally separate it from evil, and increasing its dimension, attribute it to the Infinite Being and call Him good. At the same time we forget that that which is good demands something better, and that better again requires something which is best. This shows how foolish we are when we seem to be contented after calling Him good. God is in reality beyond our conception of good, which is relative and limited. In this manner it can be shown that every attribute which we can think of, nay, every word which we can utter is finite in its meaning and idea. Yet

if we go a little deeper we shall find that no thought can exist and no word can be uttered unless there be the self-conscious thinker and speaker behind. This self-consciousness is caused by the light of intelligence which proceeds from the Self. Therefore, the Self is the absolute Truth inexpressible by speech. It is the illuminator of speech, but it can never be illumined by words.

Is Self (Atman) the same thing which is worshipped by all the great devotees and worshippers of God ? Is it some Personal God dwelling outside of us and directing our minds and senses by will and command ? Is Self the same Being who is called by different names, as Father in heaven, or Allah, whom we worship with prayers and offerings ? Is the Atman the same as an angel or bright spirit ? What is it ? Reading the mental question of his pupil the master said : " Not that which people worship here." The worshipper of a Personal God with a name and form is not the worshipper of the absolute Truth, because he worships the phenomenal God. Name and form being both phenomenal, our conception of the Divinity with a name and form is phenomenal and anthropomorphic, or in other words, we create an ideal God by projecting our ideas, give Him attributes according to our conception and then worship Him by offering Him our prayers. Prayers are nothing but words ; we send these words to the Personal God in order to obtain certain results, but He, to whom we pray with words, is not the director of

speech. That Self which is in us and makes us speak and pray is different from that which we worship with prayers. The Personal God with a form and a name is not the highest. This may seem strange to us, but we cannot deny it. God with a name and form, who can be described by words and thought of by our minds, is not the Absolute. There is a saying, "When God is known He is no longer God, He is our imagination." The Absolute Divinity is different from that which is worshipped.

Again, that which can be thought of by the mind is not the Absolute Truth or Brahman. Therefore, the master said : " That which cannot be cognized by the mind but by which all mental functions are cognized, know that to be your true Self (Brahman) but not that which people worship." " That which cannot be perceived by the eye, but by which the eyes are made to see, know that to be the Self (the Absolute Brahman), not that which people worship." " That which cannot be heard by the ear, but by which the ear is made capable of hearing a sound, know that to be the Self (the Absolute Brahman), not that which people worship." " That which cannot be perceived by the power of smell, but by which the organ of smell perceives odor, know that to be the Self (the Absolute Brahman), not that which people worship." These verses show that the true Self, who is the director of the mind and senses, is not the same as the Personal God whom people worship, but it is one with Brahman,

the absolute Truth.

Having heard this, the seeker after Self-knowledge went into meditation and searched for the illuminator or director of the mind, that which is beyond the reach of our thoughts, words and sense-powers. He spent some time in Samâdhi or the superconscious state, and realizing the Self he returned to the ordinary plane of consciousness and said: "I have known and realized the absolute Truth, I have known the Self." The master replied: "If you think that you know the Self, then you know very little of it." If you believe that you have known the Absolute Brahman perfectly, you have known very little of the Truth which dwells in you as well as in the universe. Truth is one. When you begin to think that you have known the Truth, you are using your secondary knowledge of the intellect, which cannot reveal the Absolute. If you imagine that you have known the Self or Brahman, who is the director of the mind, you have comprehended very little of it. If you think that you have realized it as dwelling in your body, you have not understood its absolute nature. If you believe that you have cognized it as dwelling outside your body, still you have not realized the Truth. If you have known the Self as God, the Creator of the universe, you have apprehended very little of it.

Here the question rises, "Why is it that we have known very little of the Self if we have known it as dwelling in our body?" Because that something which

is the director of the mind does not dwell in one place; it is beyond the space relation. Therefore, when we have known it as dwelling in a particular place and not anywhere else, we have not realized the Truth. Again, if we have perceived it as dwelling outside of us and not in us, then also we have not known that this Being is all-pervading and beyond the relation of time and space; but we have known only that much of the Infinite which is limited by time and space and conditioned by their relations.

Then the disciple sat in meditation once more, and his soul, rising above the plane of thoughts, entered into the superconscious state. Having remained there for some time he came back to the plane of sense-consciousness and declared: "I do not think I know the Self well, nor do I know that I do not know it at all. The Self is neither to be known nor is it the same as that which is absolutely unknown; he who has known this truth has realized it (the Absolute Brahman)." What he meant by this was that Self-knowledge is beyond relative knowledge and ignorance. Whatever we know by the understanding is only possible through the light of intelligence which proceeds from the true Self; there is no other knower of the Self, who is the illuminator of mind and thoughts. The Self is in reality the eternal knower, there is nothing in the universe that can know the true Self, yet it is the source of all the true knowledge that we possess. It is always the subject of

knowledge or consciousness, but never its object. Furthermore, the disciple said : “ He who thinks that the Self (Brahman) can never become an object of knowledge thinks rightly ; but he who thinks ‘ I have known it,’ has not realized its true nature. The Self (Brahman) is not known by those who think it is known ; but it is realized by those who think it is not known.”

This seems an enigma ; what does it mean ? If we analyze our perceptions what do we find ? When we see a color, we find that the sensation of color is produced by light which is a certain kind of vibration of the ether. A ray of light coming in contact with the retina causes some kind of molecular change in them ; this being carried by the optic nerves into the brain cells creates certain molecular vibration in those cells. It requires a conscious ego to translate this vibration into a sensation, which we perceive and call color. If the conscious ego be not there, then these vibrations may be carried to the brain centers where they may produce other changes, but still we shall not see the color. For instance, when we are looking at a color, if our mind be suddenly distracted or concentrated on some other object, the color may remain before our eyes, yet we do not see it. Although the vibration of light has been carried to the brain centers, the molecular changes have been formed and all the physiological conditions are fulfilled, still we have no sensation of color, because there is no one to translate the molecular vibrations of the brain cells into the sensation

of color. The ego who translates them is concentrated on something else. But when the changes are translated by the ego into sensations, then we perceive it. Now let us go a little deeper. Behind this intellectual perception there is the self-consciousness of the ego. If the ego be unconscious, if there be no sense of "I," then these vibrations will come through the senses and pass away without producing any sensation in the mind. Again, if the mind be separated from the source of apperception and intelligence, then the sensations will remain in the subconscious mind without affecting the conscious ego. This source of consciousness in us is the knower. It is our true Self.

We know that we are sitting here ; when we walk, we know that we are walking ; when we perform an act, we know that we are performing it; this knower of all acts and thoughts is the director. Is that knowledge different from our true Self ? No, it is inseparable from our Self; our true Self is like a sea of intelligence. Some people say that knowledge proceeds from the Self, or in other words, that from which this knowledge proceeds is the Self. This would imply that the Self is separate from knowledge and would raise the question, " What is then the nature of the true Self ? " According to monistic Vedanta the true nature of the Self or Atman or Brahman is absolute knowledge or absolute intelligence which never changes. The functions of the intellect and mind are changeable,

but Self-knowledge is unchangeable. Suppose you have a feeling; when it rises, you feel it and know that there is that feeling; when it subsides and another takes its place, then also you know that the new feeling is there. The knowledge by which you cognize each feeling cannot be known by any other knowledge, for there is only one knowledge in the universe; consequently the knower of that knowledge cannot be known by any other knowledge. That by which you know the existence of a feeling or a sensation cannot be revealed by intellect, understanding or any other faculty. Upon it depends intellectual understanding. Whenever we perceive any object through the senses, that knowledge is a partial expression of the Self or absolute knowledge, which directs the mind and senses to perform their functions.

The nature of the Self is all-knowing; its knowledge does not depend upon the relation between the knower and the object of knowledge, but it remains unchanged even when all the objects of knowledge have ceased to exist. The all-knowing Self may be compared to the self-effulgent sun. As the nature of the sun is to illumine himself as well as other objects, so the light of the Self illumines its own nature as also the phenomenal world. The sun himself can illumine everything as well as his own form, we do not need a candle or a torch to see him; therefore, we call him self-effulgent. Self-effulgence does not need any other light to illumine its

nature. For the same reason the Atman is said to be the self-effulgent sun of knowledge. That knowledge by which we perceive all sensations and feelings, organic functions, intellection, understanding and other activities of the mind as well as external objects, the sun, moon, stars, is the light of the self-effulgent Atman or Self, which is the source of intelligence and consciousness.

This self-effulgent Atman is the knower and director of the mind and senses. The mind and senses will not perform any function if they are separated from the self-effulgent light of knowledge. Mind, as we have already seen, is "finer matter in vibration." Vedanta does not teach that mind is the same as the Self or spirit. There is no intelligence in the vibration of the mind substance. It is not the source of consciousness. All the activities of the mind may stop, still we shall remain conscious of our Self. In the state of Samâdhi there may not be any feeling, like fear, anger, or any other modification of the mind substance, such as volition, desire, emotion, will, determination, cognition, or understanding, but still one does not lose self-consciousness or become absolutely unconscious in that state. This will prove that pure consciousness or pure intelligence is separate from and independent of mental functions.

All these functions and sensations can be stopped by entering into superconsciousness; in short, one can cut off all connection with the body and mind and still continue to be conscious on the higher plane. It will be difficult

for those who have not realized Samâdhi to grasp this truth. Intellectual knowledge will not reveal the Self ; we must learn the method of going beyond intellect and rising above the realm of thoughts if we wish to realize the Absolute Self or Atman. Intellectual apprehension being relative and imperfect, cannot transcend the limits of phenomena and cannot reach the sphere of the Absolute. Therefore, it is said, " He who thinks he knows the Self knows it not."

Self-knowledge precedes even the conception of God. If the thought about God, which is in our mind, be separated from self-consciousness it instantly vanishes and becomes non-existent. We know God because there is knowledge in us, because the light of the Self reveals the existence of God. If this be so, we ask : Which is higher, the Personal God or the Self ? The Self is higher, because it illumines the existence of God. This source of all knowledge, which is the absolute Truth, is higher than a Personal God, since the Personal God, who can be described by words and thought of by the mind, becomes subject to the mind and speech, consequently to the Self or Atman, which is the director of the mind and speech, and that which is subject to a thing must be lower or less than that which governs it. So when we try to know our true Self, we do not attempt to know it as we know the existence of a book or a tree, because that kind of knowledge will never reveal it. We must not try to see any form, because there is no form

in the Self. We must not make the objects of the senses, like sound, color, odor, touch, the starting point of our search after Self, for these are on the relative plane, while the Self is the Absolute Being.

Thus we can understand the difference between the relative plane and the absolute. So long as we are on the relative plane, we cannot reach the Absolute, because the absolute knowledge, by which we know the existence of things which are related to one another, is beyond all relations and infinite. All relative phenomena exist in and through the Absolute, but the Absolute Atman is independent and self-existent. If we were unintelligent beings and did not possess Self-knowledge, then these sensations and perceptions would have no relation to us. The pure knowledge of the Absolute Self may be compared to the thread which goes through the pearls of percepts, ideas and thoughts that rise in our minds, and strings them together into one harmonious whole, forming a garland of our daily experiences. This pure knowledge must not be confounded with the relative knowledge which is finite and related to ignorance, or non-knowledge. The Self, being the knower of ignorance, is higher and greater and its light of absolute knowledge is that by which we realize that we know this or do not know that.

In Vedanta it is said : “ The Self is the knower of that which sees, hears, thinks or perceives. It is the knower of the body, senses, mind, intellect, and heart

with which we identify our Self." Through this identification, when the Self appears as the ego, then we say that we are the hearer, seer, perceiver and thinker ; but the ego sees, hears, thinks and perceives, being dependent upon the pure knowledge of the Self. In fact the ego cannot exist without Self-knowledge. Self-knowledge and existence are one and the same. We know that we are here ; if for a moment we forget that we are in this place or if we become unconscious of our surroundings, we shall remain non-existent, as it were, in relation to our environments. Thus although we may try to separate our Self-knowledge from our existence, we can never do it ; for pure knowledge or consciousness and existence are inseparable. When we have realized Self-knowledge, we have understood our existence and discovered that the director of the mind is all-knowledge and all-existence. We say the sun exists ; why ? Because we are conscious of him ; when we are not conscious of him, as in trance, he does not exist in relation to us. Self-consciousness, therefore, is the standard of all relative knowledge and relative existence. Herein lies the beginning and end of the existence of all objects which we can think of or perceive. The moment that we are unconscious of our body and everything of this world, they will cease to exist in relation to us. We all experience this truth during our sound sleep, when our conscious connection with the body being cut off, it ceases to exist and consequently we do not claim anything of

the material world as belonging to us. But as our consciousness returns to the body, instantly the body together with everything related to it appears as belonging to us. Therefore, it is said that knowledge and existence are one.

Vedanta gives these two attributes to the Absolute Self, who is the director of the mind. The first is absolute existence, in Sanskrit " Sat "; and the second is absolute knowledge or intelligence, " Chit " in Sanskrit. These two, as we have already seen, are one and inseparable. A third attribute, however, is also given in Vedanta. It is called in Sanskrit " Ananda," meaning pure happiness or blissfulness. Where absolute knowledge and absolute existence prevail, there is also absolute happiness or blissfulness. It is different from changeable pleasure or relative happiness. Unchangeable blissfulness again is always attended with absolute peace. Wherever there is true happiness, there must be absolute peace, and the mind will not seek anything else, but will enjoy it and will try to possess it and never be separated from it. The ordinary pleasures, which we mistake for true happiness, may be agreeable for the time being, but in the next moment we dislike them and try to get away from them. Think how transitory are the pleasures that can be derived through the senses, they last only for a short time and in the reaction make us miserable. True happiness, however, is unchangeable. It brings no reaction and is everlasting. In the state of absolute existence and

pure knowledge alone can be found absolute peace and true happiness. Such is the realm of our true Self, which is above all relativity and beyond all conditions of this earth. This indivisible Sat-chit-ananda, absolute Existence-intelligence-bliss, the disciple realized in Samâdhi as the director of the mind and the source of all the phenomena of the universe.

He then said : "Whosoever realizes that which manifests within us as the conscious Self, attains to immortality." Death means a change of the body. The body may die, the mind may die, the senses may die, but pure knowledge can never die. When we know that something is dying and if we do not identify ourselves with it, but become conscious of our absolute Self, then we are sure to attain to immortality. If we once grasp the idea that we are the Absolute Being, how can we ever be changed by death into a non-being ? As being cannot come out of non-being, so it cannot go back to non-being. Pure existence can never become non-existence ; this is the proof of immortality. The Absolute Self or Atman is the immortal Being. It is also Brahman, the beginning and the end of the universe. The same eternal Being is worshipped as God under various names and forms. He is the Being who dwells in us and is inseparable from our true Self. The Absolute Being is not many but one. If there were many Absolute Beings they would be limited by each other and consequently not absolute. That one Absolute Being alone is immortal and deathless,

and by knowing it we become immortal. No Divine Incarnation can give us immortality, if we do not possess it already. The Christian belief that immortality can be obtained only through the grace of Jesus the Christ, is not founded upon the knowledge of the immortal nature of our true Self. The students of Vedanta are not deluded by such statements ; they try first to know the real Self and then they realize that immortality is their birthright.

Since the true Self is the source of all strength, the disciple said : “ We gain strength and immortality by Self-knowledge. ” Real strength comes to us when we have known that which is changeless and immortal. The spiritual strength which is gained through Self-knowledge is greater than material, physical, mental, and moral strength together. All other powers, except spiritual strength, are subject to change and death. Few people understand the meaning of “ spiritual strength. ” By the word “ spirit ” is not meant a disembodied spirit, but the Absolute Spirit or Self or Atman or Brahman. Spirit is that Self which is the source of absolute intelligence and which is the Absolute Being. Knowing it, one attains to spiritual strength, which is higher than physical or psychic strength. With physical strength a man can kill a tiger or destroy thousands of mortals, but it will not protect him from death. He may possess material strength, but it will not save his life at the last moment. He may gain psychic power and do wonderful things,

but that will not stop the changes of body and mind. Spiritual strength, however, which Self-knowledge brings, makes one free from birth and death. He who has gained physical and psychic powers will remain subject to birth and death, but if he can know that immortal Being, he becomes a master of the universe. The gigantic forces of nature serve and obey the command of him who has acquired Self-knowledge. "If a man know this Self here, he has gained the Truth." In this world of imperfection he who has known the Self has realized the Absolute Truth and has fulfilled the highest purpose of life. He has attained absolute freedom, perfect peace and true happiness in this life. But "if he does not know this here, for him there is great suffering." He who does not realize the Self comes back to this earth again and again, and, remaining in ignorance, seeks sense-pleasures and suffers great sorrow and misery. He does not escape the law of Karma and re-incarnation.

"The wise ones, who have realized the all-pervading absolute Self (Brahman) in all animate and inanimate objects, become immortal after departing from this world." The knower of the Absolute and Immortal Self becomes one with it and remains as the immortal and perfect Spirit for ever and ever.

IMMORTALITY AND THE SELF.

"That which is the Infinite is Bliss. In the finite there is no bliss. Infinity alone is bliss. This Infinity is to be realized.

"The Self (Atman) is the Infinite. Self is below, above, behind, before, right and left ; Self is all this.

"He who sees, perceives, understands, and loves the Self, delights in the Self, revels in the Self, rejoices in the Self, becomes the lord and master in all the worlds."

Chândogya Upanishad.

In the Brihadâraṇyaka Upanishad of the Yajur Veda we read that there lived in ancient India a great sage, Yâjnyavalkya by name. He was a seer of Truth and lived a pure, virtuous, and righteous life. He had a devoted wife, whose name was Maitreyi ; he performed all the duties of the house-holder as also of a good citizen, and lived in peace, doing good to others. As the result of all these good and unselfish works his heart was purified and his eyes were open to spiritual Truth. He understood the transitoriness and impermanent nature of the phenomenal world, and realizing that the life of a house-holder was only a grade in the process of evolution, he desired to enter into a higher state and make further progress. He had discovered the foolishness of people who lead a worldly life and constantly try to fulfil their

earthly desires ; therefore, he made up his mind to live a life of seclusion, and devote the rest of his days to the pursuit of eternal Truth. He wished to take refuge in the absolute Reality of the universe by retiring into the forest where he would not be disturbed by the world. Constant meditation upon the true Self had become the aim of this great seer.

One day he came to his wife and said : “ Beloved Maitreyi, verily I wish to retire into the forest, leaving with thee my wealth, property and whatever belongs to me. Enjoy these and grant me thy permission.” On hearing this, Maitreyi felt extremely unhappy, but being spiritually-minded, she asked this question : “ Bhagavan, please tell me, if I possess the whole earth with all the wealth it contains shall I gain immortality by it ? ” She was not like the wives of to-day, who are greedy for wealth and possessions and who are delighted to acquire a little inheritance ; she was not ambitious for material property like a woman of the world, but she understood that immortality was the highest of all treasures. Being guided by this ideal, she questioned : “ Shall I be immortal by possessing all the riches and property which thou art going to give me ? ” “ No,” replied the sage, “ if thou possessest the property and wealth of the world thou wilt live like the rich who enjoy, in whatever manner they desire, the luxuries, comforts and pleasures of earthly existence. There is no hope of gaining immortality by wealth. None can ever become immortal by means of

riches or material possessions." Then the wife said : "What shall I do with that thing which cannot bring me immortality ? If thou hast anything by which I shall become immortal please give me that. I do not care for thy wealth." Her husband, the great sage, replied, "Thou art truly my beloved ; thou hast spoken well, it is worthy of thee. If thou desirest, I will tell thee of that by which one can attain immortality. Come and listen attentively to what I will say."

He first explained the true nature of the object of love. People love their parents, children, husbands, wives, property, wealth and all other things that they possess, but they do not know what they love in reality. The real object of love is not a material thing, but that which lies behind the material form. "O beloved, verily I say unto thee : A wife loves her husband not for the husband's sake, but it is for the sake of the Atman, the Self, who is within, that the husband is loved." The wife does not love the dead particles of matter which make up the body of her husband, but she loves the soul, the Atman, which lies behind his form. "The husband loves his wife not for the wife's sake, but it is for the sake of the Atman, the Self, who is within, that the wife is loved." The physical body of the wife is not dear to her husband, but her soul, the Atman, is dear to him. The husband will not touch the dead body of his wife he will not love it when her soul has departed from it. People love their children, not for the children's sake,

not for the material from of their children, but it is for the sake of the Atman, the Self, that the children are loved." When a mother loves her child, do you think that she loves the matter that makes up the face or the body of the child ? No, it is the Self that, dwelling behind the material particles, gives the child its form and attracts the soul of the mother. Love cannot exist on the material plane; it is the attraction between two souls on the spiritual plane of the Self. When people love their friends and relatives, that attraction of the souls lies at the bottom of the expression of their true love.

" Verily wealth is not dear, O beloved, that thou mayst love wealth, but that thou mayst love Atman, the Self, therefore wealth is dear." The center of love is the Atman or Self. When we love wealth or property, our attraction is toward the omnipresent Self, whether we are conscious of it or not. We love animals, like dogs, horses, birds, not because of their material forms, but for the Atman, the Self, which resides within them. In this manner Yâjnyavalkya showed that wherever there is true love there is the expression of the real Self or Atman. " None, O beloved, loves an animal for the animal's sake, but for the sake of the soul of the animal." The dead material body of an animal cannot inspire love in our souls. " People love the priests (Brâhmîns), the warriors (Kshatriyas), the celestial worlds (Lokas), the bright spirits (Devas), the Scriptures (Vedas), and all other animate and inanimate objects, not for the sake of

those objects, but it is for the sake of the Self (Atman) that each of these is loved."

When a person loves another for the sake of his own lower self or ego, it is an extremely selfish love ; but when that love is directed toward the Self or Atman which dwells in another person it is no longer selfish; it gradually leads to Divine Love. In everything abides the one Self or unchangeable spirit which attracts our souls. We do not know the nature of that Self or Atman toward which all love, whether selfish or unselfish, is directed, and from which all love proceeds, whether for wealth, property, or material objects. A miser loves riches, but he knows perfectly well that riches mean nothing but a medium of exchange, that they only bring certain pleasures and comforts of the body. He is attached to his lower self, and for that reason he loves wealth which enriches his ego. The lower self of such a man is the center of attraction, and everything that brings happiness to it is very dear to him. "Therefore, O Maitreyi, the Self (Atman) is to be realized, to be heard, to be thought of, to be meditated upon. O beloved ! When the Self has been heard, thought of, meditated upon and realized, then all is known." Thou shouldst know the true nature of that Self, which is the center of all attraction, from which all love proceeds and toward which it is directed. It should be heard and meditated upon constantly ; when the mind is concentrated upon it, its true nature will be revealed. By the realization of the

true Self, through constant hearing, concentration and meditation, Self-knowledge and immortality will be gained.

Yājñavalkya continued thus : If a person loves and cares for another only for his material body and possessions, the lover is abandoned by the loved one. If we care not for the Self of another but love the dead matter, believing there is no soul in the person, do you think that person will be pleased ? No, that person will desert us instantly. If we love a priest (Brâhmīn) knowing that there is no Self in him, we shall be abandoned by him. He will immediately leave our company. If we go to a king, thinking that there is no Self in him, that he is only a mass of dead matter, we shall not be loved by him, but on the contrary we shall surely be forsaken by him. He will drive us out if he realizes that we love him not for himself but for his material possessions. " For the same reason, he who knows there is no Self in the heavens, in the gods (Devas), in the Scriptures (Vedas), in animate and inanimate objects, shall be abandoned by each one of these." If we think of a departed friend, believing there is no soul in him, we shall surely be deserted by him. If we love God, knowing Him as a mass of insentient matter, without loving His spiritual, Divine and immortal Self or Atman, He will never come to us ; we shall be forsaken by Him. Thus we can understand that whosoever knows anything elsewhere than in the true Self or Atman is and should

be abandoned by everything, because everything exists as related to the Self. "The Self is all and all is the Self."

Whatever we see, perceive or think of, is inseparably connected with the Self (Atman); it is one with the Self, and is in reality nothing but the Self.

Here it may be asked: How is it possible for us to realize that everything is the Self? To explain this Yâjnyavalkya gives the following illustrations:

"Now as the sound of a drum, when beaten with a stick, can be differentiated from other sounds by referring it to the drum or to the drumstick, which is the source of the sound, and not by any other means, so the existence of a particular object can be differentiated by referring it to the Self (Atman) which is the source of all knowledge and consciousness and without which nothing can be known." "As the sound of a conch-shell or a pipe when blown cannot be differentiated without referring it to the shell or to the pipe, as the sounds of a lute when played can be known only by referring them to the lute; as these particular sounds are but various manifestations of one common sound, so the one common Self or Atman, which is the Reality of the universe, appears through the varieties of names and forms which we perceive with our senses." "As from the one source of fire, when kindled with damp fuel, gradually emanate clouds of smoke and flame which did not exist there before, so verily, O beloved, from the one great Being, the Self (Brahman), the common source of

knowledge and intelligence has been spontaneously breathed forth all the knowledge that we possess, such as the four Vedas (Scriptures), the various branches of science and philosophy, and everything that exists in this world as well as in celestial realms."

Ordinarily we ascribe scientific knowledge to particular individuals, but in reality every kind of knowledge that we find in different people,—scientists, Yogis, and philosophers,—has proceeded from that one source, the Self. As from one fire proceed smoke, sparks and flames, so from this one Infinite Self have come out all the sciences, philosophies and spiritual truths described in the different Scriptures of the world, as also the truths of art and history. The knowledge which we possess and make use of in our daily life is the expression of that absolute knowledge which is eternal, one, indestructible and unchangeable, and which brings immortality to the knower, who realizes the Self.

At the beginning of the cosmic evolution all phenomena as well as all knowledge evolved from this one Infinite Self or Brahman. Just as a human being naturally breathes out the air that has entered his lungs, so the latent energy of the Brahman spontaneously breathed out knowledge and all phenomena which had potentially existed in it before the evolution of the universe. Again, at the time of dissolution these return to that Infinite Being and remain latent as the energy of the Brahman in the same manner as rivers, streamlets,

brooks and all waters that exist anywhere will eventually flow into one ocean. The ocean of the Infinite Brahman is the final goal as well as the source of all knowledge and phenomena of the world. "As the source of all taste is in the tongue, of all touch in the skin, of all smells in the nose, of all colors in the eye, of all sounds in the ear, of all percepts in the mind, of all knowledge in the intelligence, so the source of all intelligence is the Self or Atman or Brahman."

Thus Yājñavalkya explained to his wife how the Infinite Self is the beginning and end, the Alpha and Omega of everything. At the time of evolution everything comes out of it and during involution or dissolution everything goes back to the same source of all. The Infinite Self, Atman or Brahman, is one mass of intelligence without a second ; there is no duality or multiplicity in this one substance. "As a lump of salt has neither outside nor inside, but it is a mass of taste, so indeed the Absolute Self has neither outside nor inside, but it is altogether a mass of intelligence, unlimited, beginningless and endless."

This infinite Being appears in two aspects, the universal, which is called Brahman, and the individual, which is called the Self or Atman. As the source of individual consciousness, it manifests itself in various forms when it is connected with our body and senses ; but when it leaves this material body, the senses cease to perceive their objects and the elements return to their causal states from

which they arose. After death one cannot perceive the objects of senses. "O beloved ! Verily I say unto thee, although the Self is a mass of intelligence having departed from the body, it possesses no particular consciousness of a mortal." The expression of intelligence on the sense-plane stops after death.

On hearing this, Maitreyi replied : "O wise lord ! Thou hast bewildered me by thy statement, 'This mass of intelligence possesses no particular consciousness after death.' How can it be ?" Yâjnyavalkya answered : "O beloved ! I do not say anything bewildering ; imperishable is the nature of the Self (Atman). For thy enlightenment I will explain it to thee. The Self is deathless and immortal by nature. So long as there is the duality of the perceiver and the object of perception, so long one sees, perceives the other, one smells the other, one tastes, touches, thinks, and knows the other." The individual Self perceives sense-objects so long as it remains on the plane of duality or relativity. The perception of sight is possible only when the seer is related to an object of vision. If we are not related to that which we call odor how can we smell it ? The ego can hear a sound or taste a savor by coming in direct relation with those objects of sensation. In this manner it can be shown that all perception and sensation require the relation between the subject and object ; but when we go into deep sleep we do not see, hear, taste, smell or perceive anything. These objects exist on the sense-plane, but when we are above

and beyond it and have gone to that plane where there is neither sight nor odor nor smell nor taste, how can we see, hear or perceive anything ? All individual souls, who are in the state of dreamless sleep, become equal in their realization ; we cannot distinguish the soul of a man from that of a woman so long as he or she is in sound sleep ; then it is impossible to differentiate them. Similarly, in the state of Samâdhi or superconsciousness, where there is neither duality nor multiplicity, but the infinite ocean of intelligence, what can be seen or heard or smelled or tasted ? Where there is neither relativity nor any object of perception, how can one touch or know or think of anything ? “ How can one know that by which one knows all this ? ” Is there any power of knowledge, by which we can know the Self, who is the knower of all ? No ; because the true Self alone is the Knower of the universe.

If we seek to know the Self within us what will be the best method ? By right discrimination and analysis we can differentiate the knower from the object of knowledge. In this process of discrimination we must mentally reject everything outside of the knower by saying “ Not this, not this.” Thus when all objects of knowledge, including all sensations, perceptions, thoughts, feelings and other mental and intellectual functions are removed by right discrimination, the all-knowing Self is realized in Samâdhi. The Self or knower cannot be comprehended by intellect ; it is incomprehensible. The Self cannot perish ; it is immortal. The Self cannot be destroyed by anything ;

it is unchangeable. The Self is unattached; it is not touched by any object. The Self is unfettered ; it is free. It does not suffer ; it is beyond all suffering. It does not fail, it is always the same. “ How, O beloved, can such a Knower be known and by whom ? Thus far, O Maitreyi, the true nature of the Self can be described; and beyond this is the realization in Samâdhi (super-consciousness) which brings the attainment of immortality. He who has realized the Self, has become immortal. The knowledge of that Self, which is the source of all love, the source of intelligence, existence and all that is blissful, makes one attain to immortality.” Thus saying, Yâjnya-
valkya, the great seer of Truth, retired into the forest, devoted his time to meditating upon that eternal Self, and, ultimately realizing his true nature in Samâdhi, he gained immortal life.

Self-knowledge being the goal of life, by that alone we can understand the universe, how it has come into existence, why it stands, and where it will go after dissolution. By knowing our true Self we can know what will become of all phenomena at the time of general involution, and if we wish to become immortal, we must know this Self or Atman ; there is no other way to immortality.

“ I know this great Atman, radiant like the self-effulgent sun and beyond the darkness of ignorance. By knowing Him alone one crosses the ocean of death ; there is no other way ; there is no other way.”



REINCARNATION

REINCARNATION.

The visible phenomena of the universe are bound by the universal law of cause and effect. The effect is visible or perceptible, while the cause is invisible or imperceptible. The falling of an apple from a tree is the effect of a certain invisible force called gravitation. Although the force cannot be perceived by the senses, its expression is visible. All perceptible phenomena are but the various expressions of different forces which act as invisible agents upon the subtle and imperceptible forms of matter. These invisible agents or forces together with the imperceptible particles of matter make up the subtle states of the phenomenal universe. When a subtle force becomes objectified, it appears as a gross object. Therefore, we can say, that every gross form is an expression of some subtle force acting upon the subtle particles of matter. The minute particles of hydrogen and oxygen when combined by chemical force, appear in the gross form of water. Water can never be separated from hydrogen and oxygen, which are its subtle component parts. Its existence depends upon that of its component parts, or in other words, upon its subtle form. If the subtle state changes, the gross manifestation will also change. The peculiarity in the gross form of a plant depends upon the peculiar nature of its subtle form, the seed. The peculiar nature of the gross forms in the

animal kingdom depends upon the subtle forms which manifest variously in each of the intermediate stages between the microscopic unit of living matter and the highest man. The gross human body is closely related to its subtle body. Not only this, but every movement or change in the physical form is caused by the activity and change of the subtle body. If the subtle body be affected or changed a little, the gross body will also be affected similarly. The material body being the expression of the subtle body, its birth, growth, decay and death depend upon the changes of the subtle body. As long as the subtle body remains, it will continue to express itself in a corresponding gross form.

Now let us understand clearly what we mean by a subtle body. It is nothing but a minute germ of a living substance. It contains the invisible particles of matter which are held together by vital force, and it also possesses mind or thought-force in a potential state, just as the seed of a plant contains in it the life force and the power of growth. According to Vedanta, the subtle body consists of *Antahkaranam*, that is, the internal organ or the mind substance with its various modifications, mind, intellect, egoism, memory, the five instruments of perception: the powers of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching; the five instruments of action, such as the powers of seizing, moving, speaking, evacuating, and generating, and the five Prânas. Prâna is a Sanskrit word which means vital energy or the

life sustaining power in us. Although Prâna is one, it takes five different names on account of the five different functions it performs. This word Prâna includes the five manifestations of the vital force : First, that power which moves the lungs and draws the atmospheric air from outside into the system. This is also called Prâna. Second, that power which throws out of the system such things as are not wanted. It is called in Sanskrit Apâna. Third, it takes the name of Samâna, as performing digestive functions and carrying the extract of food to every part of the body. It is called Udâna when it is the cause of bringing down food from the mouth through the alimentary canal to the stomach, and also when it is the cause of the power of speech. The fifth power of Prâna is that which works in every part of the nervous system from head to foot, through every canal, which keeps the shape of the body, preserves it from putrefaction, and gives health and life to every cell and organ. These are the various manifestations of the vital force or Prâna. These subtle powers together with the non-composite elements of the gross body, or the ethereal particles of subtle matter, and also with the potentialities of all the impressions, ideas and tendencies which each individual gathers in one life, make up his subtle body. As a resultant of all the different actions of mind and body which an individual performs in his present life, will be the tendencies and desires in his future life ; nothing will be lost.

Every action of body or mind which we do, every thought which we think, becomes fine, and is stored up in the form of a Samskâra or impression in our minds. It remains latent for some time, and then it rises up in the form of a mental wave and produces new desires. These desires are called in Vedanta, Vâsanâs. Vâsanâs or strong desires are the manufacturers of new bodies. If Vâsanâ or longing for worldly pleasures and objects remains in anybody, even after hundreds of births, that person will be born again. Nothing can prevent the course of strong desires. Desires must be fulfilled sooner or later.

Every voluntary or involuntary action of the body, sense or mind must correspond to the dormant impressions stored up in the subtle body. Although growth, the process of nourishment and all the changes of the gross physical body take place according to the necessarily acting causes, yet the whole series of actions, and consequently every individual act, the condition of the body which accomplishes it, nay, the whole process in and through which the body exists, are nothing but the outward expressions of the latent impressions stored up in the subtle body. Upon these rests the perfect suitability of the animal or human body to the animal or human nature of one's impressions. The organs of the senses must therefore completely correspond to the principal desires which are the strongest and most ready to manifest. They are the visible expressions of these desires. If there be no hunger or desire to eat, teeth,

throat and bowels will be of no use. If there be no desire for grasping and moving, hands and legs will be useless. Similarly it can be shown that the desire for seeing, hearing, etc., has produced the eye, ear, etc. If I have no desire to use my hand, and if I do not use it at all, within a few months it will wither away and die. In India there are some religious fanatics who hold up their arms and do not use them at all; after a few months their arms wither and become stiff and dead. A person who lies on his back for six months loses the power of walking. There are many such instances which prove the injurious effects of the disuse of our limbs and organs.

As the human form, generally, corresponds to the human will, generally, so the individual bodily structure corresponds to the character, desires, will and thought of the individual. Therefore the outer nature is nothing but the expression of the inner nature. This inner nature of each individual is what re-incarnates or expresses itself successively in various forms, one after another. When a man dies the individual ego or Jiva (as it is called in Sanskrit), which means the germ of life or the living soul of man, is not destroyed, but it continues to exist in an invisible form. It remains like a permanent thread stringing together the separate lives by the law of cause and effect. The subtle body is like a water-globule which sprang in the beginningless past from the eternal ocean of Reality ;

and it contains the reflection of the unchangeable light of Intelligence. As a water-globule remains sometimes in an invisible vapory state in a cloud, then in rain or snow or ice, and again as steam or in mud, but is never destroyed, so the subtle body sometimes remains unmanifested and sometimes expresses itself in gross forms of animal or human beings, according to the desires and tendencies that are ready to manifest. It may go to heaven, that is, to some other planet, or it may be born again on this earth. It depends on the nature and strength of one's life-long tendency and bent of mind. This idea is clearly expressed in Vedanta. "The thought, will or desire which is extremely strong during lifetime, will become predominant at the time of death and will mould the inner nature of the dying person. The newly moulded inner nature will express in a new form." (Bhagavad Gîtâ.) The thought, will or desire which moulds the inner nature has the power of selecting or attracting such conditions or environments as will help it in its way of manifestation. This process corresponds in some respects to the law of "natural selection."

We shall be better able to understand that process by studying how the seeds of different trees select from the common environments different materials, and absorb and assimilate different quantities of elements. Suppose two seeds, one of an oak and the other of a chestnut, are planted in a pot. The power of growth in both the seeds is of the same nature. The environments, earth,

water, heat and light are the same. But still there is some peculiarity in each of the seeds, which will absorb from the common environments different quantities of elements and other properties which are fit to help the growth of the peculiar nature and form of the fruit, flower, leaves of each tree. Suppose the $\frac{3}{4}$ chestnut is a horse-chestnut. If, under different conditions, the peculiar nature of the horse-chestnut changes into that of a sweet chestnut, then, along with the changes in the seed, the whole nature of the tree, leaves, fruits will also be changed. It will no more attract, absorb or assimilate those substances and qualities of the environments which it did when it was a horse-chestnut. Similarly, through the law of "natural selection" the newly moulded thought-body of the dying person will choose and attract such parts from the common environments as are helpful to its proper expression or manifestation. Parents are nothing but the principal parts of the environment of the reincarnating individual. The newly moulded inner nature or subtle body of the individual will by the law "natural selection" involuntarily choose, or be unconsciously drawn to, as it were, its suitable parents and will be born of them. As, for instance, if I have a strong desire to become an artist, and if after a life-long struggle I do not succeed in being the greatest, after the death of the body I will be born of such parents and with such environments as will help me to become the best artist.

The whole process is expressed in Eastern philosophy

by the doctrine of the Reincarnation of the individual soul. Although this doctrine is commonly rejected in the West, it is unreservedly accepted by the vast majority of mankind of the present day, as it was in past centuries. The scientific explanation of this theory we find nowhere except in the writings of the Hindus ; still we know that from very ancient times it was belived by the philosophers, sages and prophets of different countries. The ancient civilization of Egypt was built upon a crude form of the doctrine of Reincarnation. Herodotus says : " The Egyptians propounded the theory that the human soul is imperishable, and that where the body of any one dies it enters into some other creature that may be ready to receive it." Pythagoras and his disciples spread it through Greece and Italy. Pythagoras says : " All has soul ; all is soul wandering in the organic world, and obeying eternal will or law."

In Dryden's Ovid we read :—

"Death has no power the immortal soul to slay,
That, when its present body turns to clay,
Seeks a fresh home, and with unlesened might
Inspires another frame with life and light."

It was the keynote of Plato's philosophy. Plato says : " Soul is older than body. Souls are continually born over again into this life." The idea of Reincarnation was spread widely in Greece and Italy by Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato, Virgil and Ovid. It was known to the Neo-Platonists, Plotinus and Proclus. Plotinus

says : " The soul leaving the body becomes that power which it has most developed. Let us fly then from here below and rise to the intellectual world, that we may not fall into a purely sensible life by allowing ourselves to follow sensible images. . . ." It was the fundamental principle of the religion of the Persian Magi. Alexander the Great accepted this idea after coming in contact with the Hindu philosophers. Julius Cæsar found that the Gauls had some belief regarding the pre-existence of the human soul. The Druids of old Gaul believed that the souls of men transmigrate into those bodies whose habits and character they most resemble. Celts and Britons were impressed with this idea. It was a favorite theme of the Arab philosophers and many Mahomedan Sufis. The Jews adopted it after the Babylonian captivity. Philo of Alexandria, who was a contemporary of Christ, preached amongst the Hebrews the Platonic idea of the pre-existence and rebirth of human souls. Philo says : " The company of disembodied souls is distributed in various orders. The law of some of them is to enter mortal bodies, and after certain prescribed periods be again set free." John the Baptist was according to the Jews a second Elijah ; Jesus was believed by many to be the re-appearance of some other prophet. (See Matt. xvi, 14, also xvii, 12.) Solomon says in his Book of Wisdom : " I was a child of good nature and a good soul came to me, or rather because I was good I came into an undefiled body."

The Talmud and Cabala teach the same thing. In the Talmud it is said that Abel's soul passed into the body of Seth, and then into that of Moses. Along with the spread of the Cabala this doctrine (which was known as Transmigration and Metempsychosis) "began to take root in Judaism and then it gained believers even among men who were little inclined towards Mysticism. Juda ben Asher (Asheri) for instance, discussing this doctrine in a letter to his father endeavored to place it upon a philosophical basis." (Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. XII, p. 232.) We also read, "The Cabalists eagerly adopted the doctrine on account of the vast field it offered to mystic speculation. Moreover it was almost a necessary corollary of their psychological system. The absolute condition of the soul is, according to them, its return, after developing all those perfections, the germs of which are eternally implanted in it, to the Infinite Source from which it emanated. Another term of life must therefore be vouchsafed to those souls which have not fulfilled their destiny here below, and have not been sufficiently purified for the state of union with the Primordial Cause. Hence if the soul, on its first assumption of a human body and sojourn on earth, fails to acquire that experience for which it descended from heaven and becomes contaminated by that which is polluting, it must reinhabit a body till it is able to ascend in a purified state through repeated trials." This is the theory of the Zohar, which says: "All souls

are subject to transmigration ; and men do not know the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He ! They do not know that they are brought before the tribunal both before they enter into this world and after they leave it ; they are ignorant of the many transmigrations and secret probations which they have to undergo, and of the number of souls and spirits which enter into this world and which do not return to the palace of the Heavenly King. Men do not know how the souls revolve like a stone which is thrown from a sling. But the time is at hand when these mysteries will be disclosed." (Zohar, II, 99 b.)

Like many of the Church Fathers the Cabalists used as their main argument in favour of the doctrine of metempsychosis, the justice of God. But for the belief in metempsychosis, they maintained, the question why God often permits the wicked to lead a happy life while many righteous are miserable would be unanswerable. Then too the infliction of pain upon children would be an act of cruelty unless it is imposed in punishment of sin committed by the soul in a previous state. Isaac Abravanel sees in the commandment of the Levirate a proof of the doctrine of metempsychosis for which he gives the following reasons: (1) God in His mercy willed that another trial should be given to the soul, which having yielded to the sanguine temperament of the body had committed a capital sin, such as murder, adultery, etc.; (2) it is only just that when a man dies

young a chance should be given to his soul to execute in another body the good deeds which it had not time to perform in the first body ; (3) the soul of the wicked sometimes passes into another body in order to receive its deserved punishment here below instead of in the other world where it would be much more severe. (Commentary on Deuteronomy, XXV, 5.)

Christianity is not exempt from this idea. Origen and other Church Fathers believed in it. Origen says : " For God, justly disposing of his creatures according to their desert, united the diversities of minds in one congruous world, that he might, as it were, adorn his mansion (in which ought to be not only vases of gold and silver, but of wood also and clay, and some to honor and some to dishonor) with these diverse vases, minds or souls. To these causes the world owes its diversity, while Divine Providence disposes each according to his tendency, mind and disposition." He also says : " I think this is a question how it happens that the human mind is influenced now by the good, now by the evil. The causes of this I suspect to be more ancient than this corporeal birth." The idea of Reincarnation spread so fast amongst the early Christians that Justinian was obliged to suppress it by passing a law in the Council of Constantinople in 538 A. D. The law was this : "Whoever shall support the mythical presentation of the pre-existence of the soul, and the consequently wonderful opinion of its return, let him be Anathema." The

Gnostics and Manichæans propagated the tenets of Reincarnation amongst the mediæval sects such as the Bogomiles and Paulicians. Some of the followers of this so-called erroneous belief were cruelly persecuted in 385 A.D.

In the seventeenth century some of the Cambridge Platonists, as Dr. Henry More and others, accepted the idea of rebirth. Most of the German philosophers of the middle ages and of recent days have advocated and upheld this doctrine. Many quotations can be given from the writings of great thinkers, like Kant, Scotus, Schelling, Fichte, Leibnitz, Schopenhauer, Giardano Bruno, Goethe, Lessing, Herder and a host of others. The great skeptic Hume says in his posthumous essay on "The Immortality of the Soul," "The metempsychosis is therefore the only system of this kind that philosophy can hearken to." Scientists like Flammarion and Huxley have supported this doctrine of Reincarnation. Professor Huxley says: "None but hasty thinkers will reject it on the ground of inherent absurdity. Like the doctrine of evolution itself, that of transmigration has its roots in the world of reality." ("Evolution and Ethics," p. 61.)

Some of the theological leaders have preached it. The eminent German theologian Dr. Julius Müller supports this theory in his work on "The Christian Doctrine of Sin." Prominent theologians, such as Dr. Dorner, Ernesti, Rückert, Edward Beecher, Henry

Ward Beecher, Phillips Brooks, preached many a time touching the question of the pre-existence and rebirth of the individual soul. Swedenborg and Emerson maintained it. Emerson says in his essay on Experience, "We wake and find ourselves on a stair. There are stairs below us which we seem to have ascended ; there are stairs above us, many a one, which go upward and out of sight."

Almost all of the poets, ancient or modern, profess it. William Wordsworth says in "Intimations of Immortality" :—

"The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar."

Tennyson writes in the "Two Voices":

"Or, if through lower lives I came—
Tho' all experience past became,
Consolidate in mind and frame—
I might forget my weaker lot,
For is not our first year forgot?
The haunts of memory echo not."

Walt Whitman says in "Leaves of Grass" :

"As to you, Life, I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,
No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before."

Similar passages can be quoted from almost all the poets of different countries. Even amongst the aboriginal tribes of Africa, Asia, North and South America, traces of this belief in the rebirth of souls is to be found. Nearly three-fourths of the population of Asia believe in the

doctrine of Reincarnation, and through it they find a satisfactory explanation of the problem of life. There is no religion which denies the continuity of the individual soul after death.

Those who do not believe in Reincarnation try to explain the world of inequalities and diversities either by the one-birth theory or by the theory of hereditary transmission. Neither of these theories, however, is sufficient to explain the inequalities, that we meet with in our everyday life. Those who believe in the one-birth theory, that we have come here for the first and last time, do not understand that the acquirement of wisdom and experience is the purpose of human life ; nor can they explain why children who die young should come into existence and pass away without getting the opportunity to learn anything or what purpose is served by their coming thus for a few days, remaining in utter ignorance and then passing away without gaining anything whatever. The Christian dogma, based on the one-birth theory, tells us that the child which dies soon after its birth is sure to be saved and will enjoy eternal life and everlasting happiness in heaven. The Christians who really believe in this dogma ought to pray to their heavenly Father for the death of their children immediately after their birth and ought to thank the merciful Father when the grave closes over their little forms. Thus the one-birth theory of Christian theology does not remove any difficulty.

Two great religions, Judaism with its two offspring—Christianity and Mahomedanism—and Zoroastrianism, still uphold the one-birth theory. The followers of these, shutting their eyes to the absurdity and unreasonableness of such a theory, believe that human souls are created out of nothing at the time of the birth of their bodies and that they continue to exist throughout eternity either to suffer or to enjoy because of the deeds performed during the short period of their earthly existence. Here the question arises why should a man be held responsible throughout eternity for the works which he was forced or predestined to perform by the will of the Lord of the universe ? The theory of predestination and grace, instead of explaining the difficulty, makes God partial and unjust. If the omnipotent personal God created human souls out of nothing, could He not make all souls equally good and happy ? Why does He make one to enjoy all the blessings of life and another to suffer all miseries throughout eternity ? Why is one born with good tendencies and another with evil ones ? Why is one man virtuous throughout his life and another bestial ? Why is one born intelligent and another idiotic ? If God out of His own will made all these inequalities, or, in other words, if God created one man to suffer and another to enjoy, then how partial and unjust must He be ! He must be worse than a tyrant. How can we worship Him, how call Him just and merciful ?

Some people try to save God from this charge of

partiality and injustice by saying that all good things of this universe are the work of God, and all evil things are the work of a demon or Satan. God created everything good, but it was Satan who brought evil into this world and made everything bad. Now let us see how far such a statement is logically correct. Good and evil are two relative terms ; the existence of one depends upon that of the other. Good cannot exist without evil, and evil cannot exist without being related to good. When God created what we call good, He must have created evil at the same time, otherwise He could not create good alone. If the creator of evil, call him by whatever name you like, had brought evil into this world he must have created it simultaneously with God ; otherwise it would have been impossible for God to create good, which can exist only as related to evil. As such they will have to admit that the Creators of good and evil sat together at the same time to create this world, which is a mixture of good and evil. Consequently, both of them are equally powerful, and limited by each other. Therefore neither of them is infinite in powers or omnipotent. So we cannot say that the Almighty God of the universe created good alone and not the evil.

Another argument which the Vedantists advance in support of the theory of Reincarnation is that " Nothing is destroyed in the universe." Destruction in the sense of the annihilation of a thing is unknown to the Vedantic

philosophers, just as it is unknown to the modern scientists. They say "non-existence can never become existence and existence can never become non-existence;" or, in other words, that which did not exist can never exist, and conversely that which exists in any form can never become non-existent. This is the law of nature. As such, the impressions or ideas which we now have, together with the powers which we possess, will not be destroyed but will remain with us in some form or other. Our bodies may change, but the powers, Karma, Samskâras or impressions and the materials which manufactured our bodies must remain in us in an unmanifested form. They will never be destroyed. Again science tells us that that which remains in an unmanifested or potential state must at some time or other be manifested in a kinetic or actual form. Therefore we shall get other bodies, sooner or later. It is for this reason said in the "Bhagavad Gîtâ" : "Birth must be followed by death and death must be followed by birth." Such a continuously recurring series of births and deaths each germ of life must go through. Another consideration is that the beginning, ending and continuing are conceptions of the human mind ; their significance depends entirely upon our conception of time. But we all know that time has no absolute existence. It is merely a form of our knowledge of our own existence in relation to that of nature. The conception of time vanishes at the sleep of death, just as it does every night when we are in sound sleep.

Death resembles the state of our sound sleep. The soul wakes up from the sleep of death just in the same manner as the insects awake in spring after sleeping the long and rigid winter-sleep, as a chrysalis in the bed of a cocoon spun by itself in autumn. Nature teaches us the great lesson of rebirth and the similarity between sleep and death by the rejuvenation of the chrysalis in the spring. After death the soul wakes up and puts on or manufactures the garment of a new body, just in the same manner as we put on new clothes after throwing away the old and worn-out ones. Thus the soul continues to manifest itself over and over again either on the human or any other plane of existence, being bound by the Law of Karma or of Cause and Sequence.

" Death, so called, is but older matter dressed
In some new form. And in a varied vest,
From tenement to tenement though tossed,
The soul is still the same, the figure only lost."

Poem on Pythagoras, Dryden's Ovid.

Here it may be asked, if we existed before our birth why do we not remember ? This is one of the strongest objections often raised against the belief in pre-existence. Some people deny the existence of the soul in the past simply because they cannot remember the events of their past. Others, again, who hold memory as the standard of existence, say, if our memory of the present ceases to exist at the time of death, with it we shall also cease to be ; we cannot be immortal ; because they hold

that memory is the standard of life, and if we do not remember then we are not the same beings.

Vedanta answers these questions by saying that it is possible for us to remember our previous existence. Those who have read "Raja Yoga" will recall that in the 18th aphorism of the third chapter it is said : " By perceiving the Samskâras one acquire the knowledge of past lives." Here the Samskâras mean the impressions of the past experience which lie dormant in our subliminal self, and are never lost. Memory is nothing but the awakening and rising of latent impressions above the threshold of consciousness. A Raja Yogi, through powerful concentration upon these dormant impressions of the subconscious mind, can remember all the events of his past lives. There have been many instances in India of Yogis who could know not only their own past lives but correctly tell those of others. It is said that Buddha remembered five hundred of his previous births.

Our subliminal self, or the subconscious mind, is the storehouse of all the impressions that we gather through our experiences during our lifetime. They are stored up, pigeon-holed there, in the *Chitta*, as it is called in Vedanta. "Chitta" means the same subconscious mind or subliminal self which is the storehouse of all impressions and experiences. And these impressions remain latent until favorable conditions rouse them and bring them out on the plane of consciousness. Here let us take an illustration : In a dark room pictures

are thrown on a screen by lantern-slides. The room is absolutely dark. We are looking at the pictures. Suppose we open a window and allow the rays of the midday sun to fall upon the screen. Would we be able to see those pictures ? No. Why ? Because the more powerful flood of light will subdue the light of the lantern and the pictures. But although they are invisible to our eyes we cannot deny their existence on the screen. Similarly, the pictures of the events of our previous lives upon the screen of the subliminal self may be invisible to us at present, but they exist there. Why are they invisible to us now ? Because the more powerful light of sense-consciousness has subdued them. If we close the windows and doors of our senses from outside contact and darken the inner chamber of our self, then by focusing the light of consciousness and concentrating the mental rays we shall be able to know and remember our past lives, and all the events and experiences thereof. Those who wish therefore to develop their memory and remember their past should practice Raja Yoga and learn the method of acquiring the power of concentration by shutting the doors and windows of their senses. And that power of concentration must be helped by the power of self-control, that is, by controlling the doors and windows of our own senses.

These dormant impressions, whether we remember them or not, are the chief factors in moulding our individual characters with which we are born, and they

are the causes of the inequalities and diversities which we find around us. When we study the characters and powers of geniuses and prodigies we cannot deny the pre-existence of the soul. Whatever the soul has mastered in a previous life manifests in the present. The memory of particular events is not so important. If we possess the wisdom and knowledge which we gathered in our previous lives, then it matters very little whether or not we remember the particular events, or the struggles which we went through in order to gain that knowledge. Those particular things may not come to us in our memory, but we have not lost the wisdom. Now, study your own present life and you will see that in this life you have gained some experience. The particular events and the struggles which you went through are passing out of your memory, but the experience has moulded your character, and the knowledge, which you have gained through that experience, has shaped you in a different manner. You will not have to go through those different events again to remember how you acquired that experience. It is not necessary, the wisdom gained is quite enough.

Then, again, we find among ourselves persons who are born with some wonderful powers. Take, for instance, the power of self-control. One is born with the power of self-control highly developed, and that self-control may not be acquired by another after years of hard struggle. Why is there this difference? Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was born with God-consciousness, and he went into the

highest state of Samâdhi when he was four years old ; but this state is very difficult for other Yogis to acquire. There was a Yogi who came to see Ramakrishna. He was an old man and possessed wonderful powers, and he said : "I have struggled for forty years to acquire that state which is natural with you." There are many such instances which show that pre-existence is a fact, and that these latent or dormant impressions of previous lives are the chief factors in moulding the individual character without depending upon the memory of the past. Because we cannot remember our past, because of the loss of memory of the particular events, the soul's progress is not arrested. The soul will continue to progress further and further, even though the memory may be weak.

Each individual soul possesses this storehouse of previous experiences in the background, in the sub-conscious mind. Take the instance of two lovers. What is love ? It is the attraction between two souls. This love does not die with the death of the body. True love survives death and continues to grow, to become stronger and stronger. Eventually it brings the two souls together and makes them one. The theory of pre-existence alone can explain why two souls at first sight know each other and become attached to each other by the tie of friendship. This mutual love will continue to grow and will become stronger, and in the end will bring these lovers together, no matter where they go. Therefore, Vedanta does not say that the death of the body

will end the attraction or the attachment of two souls ; but as the souls are immortal so their relation will continue forever.

The Yogis know how to develop memory and how to read past lives. They say, time and space exist in relation to our present mental condition ; if we can rise above this plane, our higher mind sees the past and future just as we see things before our eyes. Those who wish to satisfy the idle curiosity of their minds may spend their energy by trying to recollect their past lives. But I think it will be much more helpful to us if we devote our time and energy in moulding our future and in trying to be better than we are now, because the recollection of our former condition would only force us to make a bad use of the present. How unhappy he must be who knows that the wicked deeds of his past life will surely react on him and will bring distress, misery, unhappiness or suffering within a few days or a few months. Such a man would be so restless and unhappy that he would not be able to do any work properly ; he would constantly think in what form misery would appear to him. He would not be able to eat or even sleep. He would be most miserable. Therefore we ought to regard it as a great blessing that we do not recollect our past lives and past deeds. Vedanta says, do not waste your valuable time in thinking of your past lives, do not look backward during the tiresome journey through the different stages of evolution, always look forward and try first to attain

to the highest point of spiritual development ; then if you want to know your past lives you will recollect them all. Nothing will remain unknown to you, the Knower of the universe. When the all-knowing Divine Self will manifest through you, time and space will vanish and past and future will be changed into the eternal present. Then you will say as Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, in the “ Bhagavad Gîtâ:”—

“ Both you and I have passed through many lives ; you do not recollect any, but I know them all.” (Ch. iv., 5.)

HEREDITY AND REINCARNATION.

Those who accept the theory of heredity deny the existence of the human soul as an entity separable from the gross physical organism. Consequently they do not discuss the question whether the individual soul existed in the past or will continue to exist after the death of the body. This kind of question does not disturb their minds. They generally maintain that the individual soul is inseparable from the body or the brain or nervous system ; consequently what we call soul or the conscious entity or the thinker is produced along with the birth of the organism or brain, lasts as long as the body lasts and dies when the organism is dissolved into its elements. But those, on the other hand, who accept the theory of Reincarnation admit the existence of soul as a conscious entity which is independent of the physical organism, that it continues to live after death and that it existed before the birth of the body.

The theory of heredity has always been supported by the materialistic scientists, atheists and agnostics of all ages and also by those who believe in the special creation of the first man and woman at a certain definite time and that their qualities, character, life and soul have been transmitted to all humanity through successive generations. The commonly accepted meaning of the theory of heredity is

that all the well-marked peculiarities, both physical and mental, in the parents are handed on to the children ; or, in other words, heredity is that property of an organism by which its peculiar nature is transmitted to its descendants.

In the whole history of humanity there has never been a time when this question of heredity has been discussed so minutely and in so many different ways as it has been in the present century. Although this theory was known in the East by the ancient Vedanta philosophers, by the Buddhists of the pre-Christian era and by the Greek philosophers in the West, still it has received a new impetus and has grown with new strength since the introduction of the Darwinian theory of the evolution of species. Along with the latest discoveries in physiology, biology, embryology and other branches of modern science, the popular simple meaning of heredity—that the offspring not only resemble their parents among animals as well as among men, but inherit all the individual peculiarities, life and character of their parents—has taken the shape of the most complicated and difficult problem which it is almost impossible to solve. Our minds are no longer satisfied with Haeckel's definition that heredity is simply an overgrowth of the individual, a simple continuity of growth ; but we want to know the particular method by which hereditary transmission takes place. We ask, how can a single cell reproduce the whole body of the offspring, its mind, character and

all the peculiarities of an organism ? Out of the myriads of cells of which a body is composed, what kind of cell is that which possesses the power of reproducing the peculiarities, both mental and physical, which are to be found in the form of the new-born babe ? This is the most puzzling of all the problems which the scientific mind has ever encountered. The fundamental question connected with the theory of heredity is : How can a single cell of the body contain within itself all the hereditary tendencies of the whole organism and the nature, mind and soul of the parents ? Darwin's theory of Pangenesis,* which is only a renewed form of a similar old theory started by the Greek philosopher Democritus,† does not explain the problem satisfactorily. On the other hand, Professor Galton, Professor Roth, August Weismann and others of the same school have disproved it. These scientists, after closer observation and experiment, have raised strong objections against the commonly accepted theory of heredity, and have said that "acquired

* Darwin's provisional hypothesis of Pangenesis teaches : "Particles of an excessively minute size are continually given off from all the cells of the body ; these particles collect in the reproductive cells, and hence any change arising in the organism, at any time during its life, is represented in the reproductive cell."—Darwin, "The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication," Vol. II, pp. 349—399.

† According to Democritus, the sperm is secreted from all parts of the body of both sexes during intercourse and is animated by a bodily force ; that is, the sperm from each part of the body reproduces the same part.

characters" are never transmitted. The parents may acquire certain characters by their individual efforts, but they cannot transmit them to their children. August Weismann says: "an organism cannot acquire anything unless it has the predisposition to acquire it." ("Heredity," Vol. I, p. 171.)

Many of you are already familiar with Weismann's theory of the "continuity of the germ-plasm." He denies the old theory that we inherit everything from our parents, or that the hereditary tendencies of the parents predominate in one child, of the grandfather in another, those of the grandmother in a third, and of the great-grandfather, or great-great-grandmother in the fourth; but he has simplified this whole problem by admitting the existence of a substance which he calls "germ-plasm." He says that heredity is brought about by the transference from one generation to another of a substance with a definite chemical and, above all, molecular constitution, and he calls this substance "germ-plasm."

Dr. Weismann believes that this germ-plasm contains the potentialities of all the tendencies which are developed in an individual and that the protoplasmic molecules possess the power of growing, that is, of assimilating food and of increasing by means of division. These germ-cells or germ-plasms continue from one generation to another. "They possess the same molecular constitution, and they would therefore pass through exactly the same stages under certain conditions of

development and would form the same final product. The hypothesis of the continuity of the germ-plasm gives an identical starting-point to each successive generation, and thus explains how it is that an identical product arises from all of them. In other words, the hypothesis explains heredity as part of the underlying problems of assimilation and of the causes which act directly during ontogeny." (Vol. I, p. 170.)

According to Weismann, all the peculiarities which we find in an organism are not inherited by the organism from that of the parents, but he says : " Nothing can arise in an organism unless the predisposition to it is pre-existent, for every acquired character is simply the reaction of the organism upon a certain stimulus." (Vol. I, p. 172.) Therefore the germ-cells do not inherit all the peculiarities of the parents, but possess the predisposition or a potentiality of the tendencies which gradually develop into individual characters.

We shall be able to understand his theory better from the following quotations, which give his own words. He says : " I have called this substance ' germ-plasm,' and have assumed that it possesses a highly complex structure, conferring upon it the power of developing into a complex organism." (" Heredity," Vol. I, p. 170.) Again he says : " There is, therefore, continuity of the germ-plasm from one generation to another. One might represent the germ-plasm by the metaphor of a long, creeping rootstock from which

plants arise at intervals, these latter representing the individuals of successive generations. Hence it follows that the transmission of acquired characters is an impossibility, for if the germ-plasm is not formed anew in each individual, but is derived from that which preceded it, its structure, and, above all, its molecular constitution, cannot depend upon the individual in which it happens to occur, but such an individual only forms, as it were, the nutritive soil at the expense of which the germ-plasm grows, while the latter possessed its characteristic structure from the beginning, viz., before the commencement of growth. But the tendencies of heredity, of which the germ-plasm is the bearer, depend upon this very molecular structure, and hence only those characters can be transmitted through successive generations which have been previously inherited, viz., those characters which were potentially contained in the structure of the germ-plasm. It also follows that those other characters which have been acquired by the influence of special external conditions, during the life-time of the parent, cannot be transmitted at all." (Vol. I, p. 273.) In conclusion, Weismann writes : "But at all events we have gained this much, that the only facts which appear to directly prove a transmission of acquired characters have been refuted, and that the only firm foundation on which this hypothesis has been hitherto based has been destroyed." (Vol. I, p. 461.)

Thus we see how far the theory of heredity has been

pushed by the great scientific investigators of the present age. We have no longer any right to believe in the old often refuted hypothesis which assumes that each individual organism produces germ-cells afresh again and again and transmits all its powers developed and acquired by the parents; but, on the contrary, we have come to know to-day that parents are nothing but mere channels through which these germ-plasms or germ-cells manifest their peculiar tendencies and powers which existed in them from the very beginning. The main point is that the germs are not created by the parents, but that they existed in previous generations.

Now, what are those germs like? Wherefrom do they acquire these tendencies, these peculiarities? That is another very difficult problem. Dr. Weismann and his followers say that these peculiarities are gained or inherited "from the common stock," but what that common stock is they do not explain. Where is that common stock and why will certain germs acquire certain tendencies and other germs retain other peculiarities? What regulates them? These questions are not solved. So far we have gathered from Dr. Weismann's explanation that the parents are not the creators of the germs but, on the contrary, that the germs existed before the birth of the body, before the growth of the body, in previous generations, or in the common stock of the universe. The previous generations are dead and gone, so we may say that they existed in the universe. We

cannot now believe the old, crude, often-refuted idea that God creates the germ at the time of birth and puts into it all the powers and peculiarities of the parents. This theory makes God unjust and partial, so it does not appeal to us any more. We need better and more rational explanations. The one-birth theory, which has been preached by Christian ministers and other religionists for so many years, does not remove the difficulties, does not explain the cause of the inequalities and diversities, does not answer the question whether we acquire all the tendencies and peculiarities of the parents or whether acquired characters cannot be transmitted. We have already seen that these questions are left unsolved by the one-birth theory of Christianity and of Judaism. But this theory of "continuity of the germ-plasm" pushes the question of heredity to the door of Reincarnation. If modern science can explain what that common stock is and why and how these germs retain those peculiarities and tendencies, then the answer will be complete and not until then. The Vedanta philosophy, however, has already explained the cause of the potentiality in the germ of life or "germ-plasm" or germ-cell.

Vedanta solves this difficulty by saying that each of these germ-plasms or germs-cells is nothing but the subtle form of a reincarnating individual, containing potentially all the experiences, characters, tendencies, and desires which one had in one's previous life. It existed before the birth of the body and it will continue after the death

of the body. This germ or subtle body is not the same as the astral body of the Theosophists, or the double of the metaphysical thinkers or the disembodied spirit of the Spiritualists; but it is an ethereal center of activity—physical, mental and organic. It is a center which possesses the tendency to manifest these powers on different planes of existence. It contains the minute particles of matter or ethereal substance and the life principle or vital energy by which we live and move. It also possesses the mental powers and sense powers; but all these remain latent, just as in a seed we see that the powers of growth, of assimilation and of producing flowers and fruits are latent.

At the time of death the individual soul contracts and remains in the form of a germ of life. It is for this reason, Vedanta teaches, that it is neither the will of God nor the fault of the parents that forms the characters of children, but each child is responsible for its tendencies, capacities, powers and character. It is its own "Karma" or past actions that make a child a murderer or a saint, virtuous or sinful. The stored-up potentialities in a subtle body manifest in the character of an individual.

The argument advanced by the supporters of the theory of hereditary transmission does not furnish a satisfactory explanation of the cause of the inequalities and diversities of the universe. Why is it that the children of the same parents show a marked dissimilarity to their parents and each other? Why do twins develop into dissimilar

characters and possess opposite qualities, although they are born of the same parents at the same time and brought up under similar conditions and environments ? How can heredity explain such cases ? Suppose a man has five children ; one is honest and saintly, another is an idiot, the third becomes a murderer, the fourth a genius or prodigy, and the fifth a cripple and diseased. Who made these dissimilarities ? They cannot be accidents. There is no such thing as an accident. Every event of the universe is bound by the law of cause and effect. There must be some cause of these inequalities. Who made one honest and saintly, another an idiot, and so forth ? Parents ? That cannot be. They never dreamed that they would beget a murderer or a villain or an idiot. On the contrary, all parents wish their children to be the best and happiest. But in spite of such desires they get such children. Why ? What is the cause ? Does the theory of heredity explain it ? No, not at all.

Suppose a man, twenty-four years old, who has certain traits, like musical or artistic talents, such as painting and so on, has a crooked nose and other peculiarities, like cross-eyes, which resemble those of his grandfather. Suppose his grandfather died six years before he was born. Now, those who believe in the theory of heredity will say that this young man inherited all these peculiarities from his grandfather. When did he inherit ? His grandfather had died six years before he was born. He inherited, of course, in the form of that germ. What

is that germ like? A minute protoplasm, a jelly-like substance, and if you examine it with a powerful microscope you will hardly find any difference between it and the protoplasmic germ of a dog, or of a cat, or of a tree. It is smaller than a pin's head. And in that state this young man inherited all these peculiarities from his grandfather ; or, in other words, before he had a nose, he got a crooked nose; before he had eyes, he inherited cross-eyes, and before he had any brain, he inherited all the wonderful powers—his musical and artistic talents. Does it not seem absurd to you ? Even if we admit this theory of heredity, then what do we understand? That the whole of this young man existed in the form of a protoplasm before he was born. His cross-eyes, his crooked nose, his artistic talents—all these pre-existed in the form of a protoplasmic cell. This leads up to the same thing which is taught by the theory of Reincarnation, or, in other words, if it be possible for this young man to remain in the form of a protoplasm and inherit all these things before his birth, why cannot we believe that the soul or the subtle body of this young man possessed them from the very beginning ? According to Vedanta this young man was not the creature of his grandfather, but he had his own independent existence ; only by coming through the channel of his parents he had received certain characteristic impressions, just as a tree in its process of growth will receive from the environments certain peculiarities when it assimilates those properties.

The doctrine of Reincarnation alone can explain satisfactorily and rationally the diversities among children and the reason of the many instances of uncommon powers and genius displayed in childhood. The theory of heredity has up to this time failed to give any good reason for them. Why is it that Pascal, when twelve years old, succeeded in discovering for himself the greater part of plane geometry. How could the shepherd Mangiamelo, when five years old, calculate like an arithmetical machine. Think of the child Zerah Colburn : when he was under eight years of age he could solve the most tremendous mathematical problems instantly and without using any figures. " In one instance he took the number 8 and raised it up progressively to the sixteenth power and instantly mentioned the result which contained 15 figures—281,474,976,710,656." Of course he was right in every figure. When asked the square root of numbers consisting of six figures, he would state the result instantly with perfect accuracy. He used to give the cube root of numbers in the hundreds of millions the very moment when it was asked. Somebody asked him once how many minutes there were in 48 years, he answered, 25,288,800.

Mozart, the great musician, wrote a sonata when he was four years old and an opera in his eighth year. Theresa Milanolla played the violin with such skill that many people thought that she must have played before her birth. There are many such instances of wonderful

powers exhibited by artists and painters when they were quite young. Sankarâcharya, the great commentator of the Vedanta philosophy, finished his commentary when he was twelve years old. How can such cases be explained by the theory of hereditary transmission ? Many of you have heard of the wonderful musical talents of Blind Tom. This blind negro slave was born on his master's plantation and was brought up as a typical negro. He received no training in music or in any other line. One day when his master's family were at dinner he happened to come into his master's parlor and displayed his marvellous musical power for the first time by playing on his master's piano. Afterwards he was exhibited in different states of this country. Physically he was nothing but a typical negro. His intellect was very poor, but in music he was a master. His musical talents were so great that he composed music for himself and played his own compositions. Sometimes after hearing a new piece of rapid music once, he could reproduce it note for note. Where did he get all these powers ? From whom did he inherit them ? His parents perhaps never heard of a piano. He never had a lesson in his life, and he could not have understood even if he had had any. Not long ago I saw a girl of about six years, who played the piano most beautifully and who could reproduce the most difficult music after hearing it once. It seems to me that she must have played the piano in her previous incarnation. This is the only explanation that we can give.

Does heredity explain such cases ? No. These illustrations are sufficient to disprove the theory of "cumulative heredity." "Cumulative" means gradualness. The believers in this theory say that a genius is the result of cumulative heredity, that is, it presents itself by degrees from less genius to greater and still greater and so on. In the whole history of the genealogy of geniuses, like Homer, Plato, Shakespeare, Goethe, Raphael, there never was in their families almost Plato, almost Shakespeare, or almost Goethe. Neither is it possible to trace the extraordinary powers of any of these back to any member of their ancestral line. Therefore we can say that no other theory than that of Reincarnation can explain satisfactorily the causes which produce geniuses and prodigies in this world.

Those who accept the truth of Reincarnation do not blame their parents for their poor talents, or for not possessing extraordinary powers, but they remain content with their own lot, knowing that they have made themselves as they are to-day by their own thoughts and deeds in their previous incarnations. They understand the meaning of the saying "what thou sowest thou must reap," and always endeavor to mould their future by better thoughts and better deeds. They explain all the inequalities and diversities of life and character by the law of "Karma," which governs the process of Reincarnation as well as the gradual evolution of the germs of life from lower to higher stages of existence.

EVOLUTION AND REINCARNATION.

The amazing achievements of modern science have been opening every day new gates of wisdom and slowly bringing human minds nearer and nearer to the ultimate reality of the universe. The fire of knowledge kindled by science has already burnt down many dogmas and beliefs, held sacred by the superstition of the past, which stood in the way of truth-seeking minds. In the first place science has disproved the theory of the creation of the universe out of nothing by the action of some supernatural power. It has shown that the universe did not appear in its present form or come into existence all of a sudden only a few thousand years ago, but that it has taken ages to pass through different stages before it could reach its present condition. Each of these stages was directly related to a previous stage by the law of causation, which always operates in accordance with definite rules. The phenomena of the universe, according to science, are subject to evolution, or gradual change and progressive development from a relatively uniform condition to a relative complexity. From the greatest solar system down to the smallest blade of grass, everything in the universe has taken its present shape and form through this cosmic process of evolution. Our planet earth has gradually

evolved, perhaps out of a nebulous mass which existed at first in a gaseous state. The sun, moon, stars, satellites and other planets have come into existence by going through innumerable changes produced by the evolutionary process of the Cosmos. Through the same process plants, insects, fishes, reptiles, birds, animals, men, and all living matter that inhabit this earth have evolved from minute germs of life into their present forms. The theory of Evolution says that man did not come into existence all of a sudden, but is related to lower animals and to plants, either directly or indirectly. The germ of life had passed through various stages of physical form before it could appear as a man. That branch of science which is called Embryology has proved the fact that "man is the epitome of the whole creation." It tells that the human body before its birth passes through all the different stages of the animal kingdom—such as the polyp, fish, reptile, dog, ape, and at last, man. If we remember that nature is always consistent, that her laws are uniform and that whatever exists in the microcosm exists also in the macrocosm, and then study nature, we shall find that all the germs of life which exist in the universe are bound to pass through stages resembling the embryonic types before they can appear in the form of man.

In explaining the theory of Evolution, science says that there are two principal factors in the process of evolution; the first is the tendency to vary, which exists in

all living forms whether vegetable or animal ; the second is the tendency of environment to influence that variation, either favorably or unfavorably. Without the first, evolution of any kind would be absolutely impossible. But the cause of that innate tendency to vary is still unknown to science. Upon the second depends the law of natural selection. The variation must be adapted to favorable conditions of life ; consequently either the germ of life will select suitable environments or vary itself in order to suit the surrounding conditions, if they are unfavorable. But the agent of this selective process is the struggle for existence, which is a no less important factor. Thus Evolution depends on these three laws : Tendency to vary, or variation, natural selection, and struggle for existence. Science tries to explain through these three laws the physical, mental, intellectual, moral and spiritual evolution of mankind. But the theory of Evolution will remain unintelligible until science can trace the cause of that innate "tendency to vary" which exists in every stage of all living forms.

If we study closely we find that man's "self" consists of two natures, one animal and the other moral or spiritual. Animal nature includes all the animal propensities, desire for sense enjoyments, love of self, fear of death and struggle for existence. Each of these is to be found in lower animals as well as in human beings, the difference being only in degree and not in kind. In a savage tribe the expression of this animal nature is simple

and natural, while in a highly civilized nation it is expressed not in a simple and straight forward manner, but in an artful and refined way. In a civilized community the same nature working through varied device, policy and plan brings the same results in a more polished form. In the struggle for existence amongst lower animals and savage tribes, those who are physically strong survive and gain advantage over those who are physically weak ; while in the civilized world the same result is obtained, not by displaying physical force, but by art, diplomacy, policy, strategy and skill. Various kinds of defensive and offensive weapons have been invented to conquer those who are less skillful in using them, although they may be physically stronger. The simple expression of animal nature which we notice in savages and lower animals, by the natural process of evolution has gradually become more and more complex, as we find in the civilized nations of the world. The energy of the lower human nature is spent chiefly in the struggle for material existence.

But there is another nature in man which is higher than this. It expresses itself in various ways, but on a higher plane. Love of truth, mastery over passion, control of the senses, disinterested self-sacrifice, mercy and kindness to all creatures, desire to help the distressed, forgiveness, faith in a Supreme Being and devotion ; all these are the expressions of that higher moral and spiritual nature. They

cannot be explained as developed from animal nature by means of the struggle for material existence. For these qualities are not to be found in lower animals, although the struggle for existence is there. The moral and spiritual nature of human beings cannot be traced as the outgrowth or gradual development of the animal nature. There is a dispute among the Evolutionists as to the method of explaining their cause. Some say that these higher faculties have evolved out of the lower ones and have developed by variation and natural selection; while others hold that some other higher influence, law or agency is required to account for them.

Professor Huxley says : “ As I have already urged, the practice of that which is ethically best—what we call goodness or virtue—involves a course of conduct which in all respects is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion, it demands self-restraint; in place of thrusting aside or treading down all competitors, it requires that the individual shall not merely respect, but shall help his fellows; its influence is directed not so much to the survival of the fittest as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive. It repudiates the gladiatorial theory of existence. It demands that each man who enters into the enjoyment of the advantages of a polity shall be mindful of his debt to those who have laboriously constructed it, and shall take heed that no act of his weakens the fabric in which he has been permitted to live. Laws

and moral precepts are directed to the end of curbing the cosmic process, and reminding the individual of his duty to the community, to the protection and influence of which he owes, if not existence itself, at least the life of something better than a brutal savage." ("Evolution and Ethics," pp. 81-82.)

Prof. Calderwood says : " So far as human organism is concerned, there seem no overwhelming obstacles to be encountered by an evolution theory, but it seems impossible under such a theory to account for the appearance of the thinking, self-regulating life distinctly human." Thus, according to some of the best thinkers, the explanation of the moral and spiritual nature of man as a development of the animal nature, is quite insufficient and unsatisfactory. The theory of natural selection in the struggle for existence cannot explain the cause of the higher nature of man. We cannot say that a theory is complete because it explains many facts. On the contrary, if it fails to explain a single fact, then it is proved to be incomplete. As such, the theory that cannot explain satisfactorily the cause of the moral and spiritual nature of man cannot be accepted as a complete theory. That explanation will be considered as complete which will explain most satisfactorily all the various manifestations of the animal, moral and spiritual nature. Moreover, supposing the " tendency to vary " has evolved into the moral and spiritual nature of man, science does not explain the cause of that tendency to vary, nor how

animal nature can be transformed into moral and spiritual nature. Is that "tendency to vary" indefinite, or is it limited by any definite law? Science does not say anything about it.

The explanation of the theologians, that the spiritual nature has been superadded to the animal nature by some extra-cosmic spiritual agency is not scientific, nor does it appeal to our reason.

Now let us see what Vedanta has to say on this point. Vedanta accepts evolution and admits the laws of variation and natural selection, but goes a step beyond modern science by explaining the cause of that "tendency to vary." It says, "there is nothing in the end which was not also in the beginning." It is a law which governs the process of evolution as well as the law of causation. If we admit this grand truth of nature, then it will not be difficult to explain by the theory of Evolution the gradual manifestation of the higher nature of man. The tendency of scientific monism is towards that end.

Some of the modern scientists who hold the monistic position have found out the same truth which was discovered long ago by the Vedantic philosophers in India. J. Arthur Thomson, an eminent English scientist of the present day, in his book on "The Study of Animal Life," says: "The world is one, not two-fold, the spiritual influx is the primal reality and there is nothing in the end which was not also in the beginning."

But the evolutionists do not accept this truth. Let us understand it clearly. It means that that which existed potentially at the time of the beginning of evolution has gradually manifested in the various stages and grades of evolution. If we admit that a unicellular germ of life or a bioplasm, after passing through various stages of evolution, has ultimately manifested in the form of a highly developed human being, then we shall have to admit the potentiality of all the manifested powers in that germ or bioplasm, because the law is "that which exists in the end existed also in the beginning." The animal nature, higher nature, mind, intellect, spirit, all these exist potentially in the germ of life. If we do not admit this law then the problem will arise : How can non-existence become existent ? How can something come out of nothing ? How can that come into existence which did not exist before ? Each germ of life, according to Vedanta, possesses infinite potentialities and infinite possibilities. The powers that remain latent have the natural tendency to manifest perfectly and to become actual. In their attempt they vary according to the surrounding environments, selecting suitable conditions or remaining latent as long as circumstances do not favor them. Therefore variation, according to Vedanta, is caused by this attempt of the potential powers to become actual. When life and mind began to evolve, the possibilities of action and reaction hitherto latent in the germ of life became real and all things became, in a sense, new.

Nobody can imagine the amount of latent power which a minute germ of life possesses until it expresses in gross form on the physical plane. By seeing the seed of a Banyan tree, one who has never seen the tree cannot imagine what powers lie dormant in it. When a baby is born we cannot tell whether he will be a great saint, or a wonderful artist, or a philosopher, or an idiot, or a villain of the worst type. Parents know nothing about his future. Along with his growth certain latent powers gradually begin to manifest. Those which are the strongest and most powerful will overcome others and check their course for some time ; but when the powers that remain subdued by stronger ones get favorable conditions they will appear in manifested forms. As, for instance, chemical forces may slumber in matter for a thousand years, but when the contact with the re-agents sets them free, they appear again and produce certain results. For thousands of years galvanism slumbered in copper and zinc, which lay quietly beside silver. As soon as all three are brought together under the required conditions silver is consumed in flame. A dry seed of a plant may preserve the slumbering power of growth through two or three thousand years and then reappear under favorable conditions. Sir G. Wilkinson, the great archæologist, found some grains of wheat in a hermetically sealed vase in a grave at Thebes, which must have lain there for three thousand years. When Mr. Pettigrew sowed them they grew into plants. Some

vegatable roots found in the hands of an Egyptian mummy, which must have been at least two thousand years old, were planted in a flower-pot, and they grew and flourished. Thus, whenever the latent powers get favorable conditions, they manifest according to their nature, even after thousands of years.

Similarly, there are many instances of slumbering mental powers. After remaining dormant for a long period in our normal condition, they may, in certain abnormal states—such as madness, delirium, catalepsy, hypnotic sleep and so forth—flash out into luminous consciousness and throw into absolute oblivion the powers that are manifesting in the normal state. Talents for eloquence, music, painting, and uncommon ingenuity in several mechanical arts, traces of which were never found in the ordinary normal condition are often evolved in the state of madness. Somnambulists in deep sleep have solved most difficult mathematical problems and performed various acts with results which have surprised them in their normal waking states. Thus we can understand that each individual mind is the store-house of many powers, various impressions and ideas, some of which manifest in our normal state, while others remain latent. Our present condition of mind and body is nothing but the manifested form of certain dormant powers that exist in ourselves. If new powers are roused up and begin to manifest the whole nature will be changed into a new form. The manifestation of latent powers is at the bottom

of the evolution of one species into another. This idea has been expressed in a few words by Patanjali, the great Hindu evolutionist who lived long before the Christian era.* In the second aphorism of the fourth chapter (see "Râja Yoga" by Swâmi Vivekânanda, p. 210) it is said, "The Evolution into another species is caused by the in-filling of nature." The nature is filled not from without but from within. Nothing is superadded to the individual soul from outside. The germs are already there, but their development depends upon their coming in contact with the necessary conditions requisite for proper manifestation. We sometimes see a wicked man suddenly become saintlike. There are instances of murderers and robbers becoming saints. A religionist will explain the cause of their sudden change, by saying that the grace of the Almighty has fallen upon

* The reader ought to know that the doctrine of Evolution was known in India long before the Christian era. About the seventh century, B. C., Kapila, the father of Hindu Evolutionists, explained this theory for the first time through logic and science.

Sir Monier Monier Williams says: "Indeed if I may be allowed the anachronism, the Hindus were Spinozites more than 2,000 years before the existence of Spinoza; and Darwinians many centuries before Darwin; and Evolutionists many centuries before the doctrine of Evolution had been accepted by the scientists of our time and before any word like Evolution existed in any language of the world." (P. 12, "Hinduism and Brahminism.") Prof. Huxley says: "To say nothing of Indian Sages to whom Evolution was a familiar notion ages before Paul of Tarsus was born." (P. 150, "Science and Hebrew Tradition.")

them and transformed their whole nature. But Vedanta says that the moral and spiritual powers that remained latent in them have been roused up, and the result is the sudden transformation. None can tell when or how the slumbering powers will wake up and begin to manifest. The germ of life, or the individual soul as it is ordinarily called, possesses infinite possibilities. Each germ of life is studying, as it were, the book of its own nature by unfolding one page after another. When it has gone through all the pages, or, in other words, all the stages of evolution, perfect knowledge is acquired, and its course is finished. We have read our lower nature by turning each page, or, in other words, by passing through each stage of animal life from the minutest bioplasm up to the present stage of existence. Now we are studying the pages which deal with moral and spiritual laws. If any one wants to read any page over again he will do it. Just as in reading a book, if anybody feels particularly interested in any page or chapter he will read it over and over again and will not open a new page or a new chapter until he is perfectly satisfied with it. Similarly, in reading the book of life, if the individual soul likes any particular stage, he will stay there until he is perfectly satisfied with it ; after that he will go forward and study other pages. One may read very slowly, and another very fast ; but whether we read slowly or rapidly each one of us is bound to read the whole book of nature and attain to perfection sooner or later.

According to Vedanta, the end and aim of Evolution is the attainment of perfection. Physical evolution of animal life reached its perfection in human form. There cannot be any other form higher than human on this earth under present conditions. It is the perfection of animal form. From this we can infer that the tendency of the law of Evolution is to reach perfection. When it is attained to, the whole purpose is served. Do we see in nature any other higher form evolved out of the human body ? No. Shall we not be justified if we say that the end of physical evolution is the attainment of the perfection of animal form ? Again as the purpose and method of natural laws are uniform throughout the universe, the end of intellectual, moral and spiritual evolution will be attained when intellectual, moral and spiritual perfection are acquired. Intellectual perfection means perfection of intellect ; and intellect is perfect when we understand the true nature of things and never mistake the unreal for the real, matter for spirit, non-eternal for eternal, or *vice versa*. Moral perfection consists in the destruction of selfishness ; and spiritual perfection is the manifestation of the true nature of spirit which is immortal, free, divine and one with the Universal Spirit or God. Evolution attains to the highest fulfilment of its purpose when the spirit manifests perfectly. The tendency of nature is to have perfect manifestation of all her powers. When certain powers predominate they manifest first while the

others remain dormant. As we find in the process of evolution, when animal nature manifests perfectly the moral and spiritual nature remain latent. Again when moral and spiritual nature manifest fully, the animal is in abeyance. It is for this reason we do not find expressions of moral and spiritual nature in lower animals or in those human beings who live like them. Man is the only animal in whom such perfect expressions of moral and spiritual nature are possible.

When the individual soul begins to study its spiritual nature, its lower or animal nature is gradually eclipsed. As the higher nature becomes powerful the lower nature dwindles into insignificance ; its energy is transformed into that of the higher nature, and ultimately it disappears altogether and rises no more. Then the soul becomes free from the lower or animal nature. There are many stages in the higher nature, as well as in the lower. Each of these stages binds the individual soul so long as it stays there. As it rises on a higher plane the lower stages disappear and cease to bind. But the moment that any individual, after passing through all the stages of the spiritual nature, reaches the ultimate point of perfection, he realizes his true nature which is immortal and divine. Then his true individuality manifests. For lack of true knowledge, he identified himself with each stage successively and thought that his individuality was one with the powers which were manifested in each stage. Consequently he

thought by mistake that he was affected by the changes of each stage. But now he realizes that his real individuality always remained unaffected. He sees that his true individuality shines always in the same manner, although the limiting adjuncts may vary. As the light of a lamp appears of different colors if it passes through glasses of different colors, so the light of the true individual appears as animal or human when it passes through the animal or human nature of the subtle body. The subtle body of an individual changes from animal nature through moral and spiritual into divine. As this gradual growth cannot be expected in one life we shall have to admit the truth of Reincarnation, which teaches gradual evolution of the germ of life or the individual soul through many lives and various forms. Otherwise the theory of Evolution will remain imperfect, incomplete and purposeless. The doctrine of Reincarnation differs from the accepted theory of Evolution in admitting a gradual but continuous evolution of the subtle body through many gross forms. The gross body may appear or disappear, but the subtle body continues to exist even after the dissolution of the gross body and re-manifests itself in some other form.

The theory of Reincarnation when properly understood will appear as a supplement to the theory of Evolution. Without this most important supplement the Evolution theory will never be complete and perfect. Evolution explains the process of life, while Reincarnation explains

the purpose of life. Therefore, both must go hand in hand to make the explanation satisfactory in every respect.

James Freeman Clarke says: "That man has come up to his present state of development by passing through lower forms, is the popular doctrine of science to-day. What is called Evolution teaches that we have reached our present state by a very long and gradual ascent from the lowest animal organizations. It is true that the Darwinian theory takes no notice of the evolution of the soul, but only of the body. But it appears to me that a combination of the two views would remove many difficulties which still attach to the theory of natural selection and the survival of the fittest. If we are to believe in Evolution let us have the assistance of the soul itself in this development of new species. Thus science and philosophy will co-operate, nor will poetry hesitate to lend her aid." (P. 190, "Ten Great Religions," II.) Evolution of the body depends upon the evolution of the germ of life or the individual soul. When these two are combined the explanation becomes perfect.

The theory of Reincarnation is a logical necessity for the completion of the theory of Evolution. If we admit a continuous evolution of a unit of the germ of life through many gross manifestations then we unconsciously accept the teachings of the doctrine of Reincarnation. In passing through different forms and manifestations the

unit of life does not lose its identity or individuality. As an atom does not lose its identity or individuality (if you allow me to suppose an atom has a kind of individuality) although it passes from the mineral, through the vegetable, into the animal, so the germ of life always preserves its identity or individuality although it passes through the different stages of evolution.

Therefore it is said in the "Bhagavad Gîtâ," as in our ordinary life the individual soul passes from a babe body to a young one and from a young to an old, and carries with it all the impressions, ideas and experience that it has gathered in its former stage of existence and reproduces them in proper time, so when a man dies the individual soul passes from an old body into a new one, and takes with it the subtle body wherein are stored up all that it experienced and gathered during its past incarnations. Knowing this, wise men are never afraid of death. They know that death is nothing but a mere change from one body into another. Therefore, if any one does not succeed in conquering the lower nature by the higher, he will try again in his next incarnation, after starting from the point which he reached in his past life. He will not begin again from the very beginning, but from the last stage at which he arrived. Thus we see that Reincarnation is the logical sequence of evolution. It completes and makes perfect that theory and explains the cause of the moral and spiritual nature of man.

WHICH IS SCIENTIFIC—RESURRECTION OR REINCARNATION ?

The students of history are interested to know where the idea of resurrection first arose and how it was adopted by other nations. If we read carefully the writings ascribed to Moses and other writers of the Old Testament we find that the ancient Israelites did not believe in the Christian heaven or hell, nor in reward or punishment after death. It is doubtful whether they had any clear conception of the existence of soul after the dissolution of the human body. They had no definite idea of the hereafter. They did not believe in the resurrection either of the soul or body. Job longed for death thinking that it would end his mental agony. In Psalms we read, "Wilt Thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise Thee?" (Ps. lxxxviii, 10.) "In death there is no remembrance of Thee; in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?" (Ps. vi, 5.) Again (Ps. cxlvi, 4) it is said about princes and the son of man,—“His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish.” “The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.” (Ps. cxv, 17.)

Solomon speaks boldly: “All things come alike to all ; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to

the good and to the clean and to the unclean . . . as is the good, so is the sinner." (Eccl. ix, 2.) "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart. . . . Live joyfully with thy wife . . . for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." (Eccl. ix, 7, 9, 10.) Again in verse 5 it is said: "The dead know not anything, neither have they anymore a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten." Solomon says: "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast." "All go into one place; all are of the dust and all turn to dust again." "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" (Eccl. iii, 19-21.) There are many such passages which show clearly that before the Babylonian captivity the Israelites had no belief in reward or punishment, neither in heaven nor hell nor in the resurrection of the soul. Some say that they had a belief in a sheol or pit where departed souls remained after death, but were never resurrected. But when the ancient Jews were conquered by the Persians, 536 B.C., they came in contact with a nation which had developed a belief in one God, in a heaven and a hell, in the resurrection of the dead, in reward and punishment after death, and in the last day of judgment. Under the dominion of Persia, whose rule

began with the capture of Babylon and lasted from 536-333 B.C., the Jews were greatly influenced by the Persian religion. They gave up their idolatry, gradually developed social organization and had considerable liberty. About that time the Jews were divided into two classes, the Pharisees and Sadducees. Those who adopted the religious ideas of the Parsees were called Pharisees (according to some authorities the word Pharisee was the Hebrew form of Parsee), and those who followed strictly the Jewish ideas, ceremonies, rituals and beliefs were called Sadducees. The former were sharply opposed to the latter in their doctrinal beliefs. They believed in angels and spirits, they expected the resurrection of the dead and believed in future reward and punishment and also in Divine pre-ordination. The Sadducees did not step beyond the bounds of ancient Judaism. They were orthodox and very conservative in their views. They denied the existence of angels and spirits, the resurrection of the dead, and reward and punishment after death. In Matt. xxii, 23, we read, "The same day came to him the Sadducees which say that there is no resurrection." The Sadducees were fewer in number than the Pharisees. Gradually the latter grew very powerful and after the death of Jesus their doctrines of the resurrection of the dead, and of reward and punishment after death, and the belief in angels and spirits, became the cardinal principles of the new Christian sect.

Thus we see that the idea of resurrection first arose in Persia and afterwards took a prominent place in the writings of the New Testament, and since then it has been largely accepted by the Christians of the Western countries. The Zoroastrians believed that the soul of the dead hovers about the body for three nights and does not depart for the other world until the dawn after the third night. Then the righteous go to heaven and the wicked to hell. There the wicked remain until the time of renovation of the universe, that is, the judgment day. After the renovation, when Ahriman or Satan is killed, the souls of the wicked will be purified and have everlasting progress.* The question was asked, "How shall they produce resurrection?" Ahura Mazda says: "The reply is this, that the preparation and production of the resurrection are an achievement connected with miracle, a sublimity, and afterwards also a wondrous appearance unto the creatures uninformed. The secrets and affairs of the persistent Creator are like every mystery and secret."†

The Zoroastrians believed in the resurrection, not of the physical body, but of the soul, and that it was an act of miracle. Similarly miraculous was the resurrection of Jesus. Although Jesus Himself never mentioned what kind of resurrection, whether of body or of soul that

*" Sacred Books of the East," Vol. xvii, pp. 27, 34, 46.

† *Ibid.*, p. 80.

He meant and believed in, the interpretation of the writers of the Gospels shows that His disciples understood Him to mean bodily resurrection and the re-appearance of His physical form. The three days remained, just as the Zoroastrians believed. The miraculous and wondrous appearance of Jesus before His disciples was preached most vigorously by Paul. In his Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul declares emphatically that the whole of the Christian religion depends upon the miraculous resurrection and re-appearance of Jesus. Although Paul said the spiritual body of the risen dead is not the same as flesh and blood body (1 Cor., xv), still that important point is generally overlooked, and the result is the belief which we find amongst some of the Christian sects ; that at the call of the angels, the body will rise from the grave and the mouldering dust of bones and flesh will be put together by the miraculous power of the Almighty God. Paul says: " But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept " (1 Cor., xv, 20). He preached that Christ was the first born from the dead, that those who believe in Christ would rise as He did and that those who would not believe in Him or in His resurrection should not rise.

We have already noticed that the Parsees believed in a miraculous resurrection ; that the same miracle became more definite in the case of Jesus ; and that the Christian faith was afterwards founded upon that miraculous event.

Both the Parsees and the followers of Christ did not mean by resurrection any universal law, but a miracle done by certain supernatural powers. They did not give any scientific reasons for such a miracle.

But modern science denies miracles. It teaches that this universe is guided, not by miracles as the old thinkers used to believe, but by definite laws which are always consistent and universal. There cannot be any exception to those laws which are uniform throughout. If resurrection be one of those laws, then it must have existed before the birth of Jesus ; as such, how could He be the first born from the dead, as described by Paul ? Conversely, if Jesus was the first who rose from the dead, then resurrection cannot be a universal law. Scientists would not believe in anything which is not based upon universal laws. Some of the agnostics and materialists have gone so far as to say that Jesus did not die on the cross, but his animation was suspended when his body was taken down from the cross by Joseph of Arimathæa. When Joseph went to Pilate and craved the body of Jesus, Pilate marvelled if He were dead (Mark xv, 44), because it was only six hours after the crucifixion. Some of the modern physiologists are of opinion that temperate and strong men might live for several days on the cross. These heretical agnostics and skeptical scientists say that the body of Jesus revived after a few hours in the cool, rock-cut tomb, that he walked out of the tomb, went to Galilee and appeared before his

disciples.* Whatever the facts may be (nobody can now tell exactly what actually happened) it is clear that the scientists are not ready to take anything upon authority. They do not care to believe in anything because it is written in this book or that. They must have convincing proofs and a rational explanation of every phenomenon of nature. They want to penetrate into miracles in order to discover the universal laws that govern them. If they do not find any such laws, they will surely reject every event that is supposed to be caused by miraculous or supernatural powers.

The theory of a miraculous resurrection is attended with the belief that the individual soul does not exist before birth. The supporters of this theory hold that at the time of birth, the individual, being created out of nothing, comes fresh into existence. But science tells us that sudden creation out of nothing and a total destruction of anything are both impossible. Matter and force are indestructible. Science teaches evolution and not creation, and denies the intervention of any supernatural being as the cause of phenomenal changes. The theory of Resurrection ignores all these ultimate conclusions of modern science. On the contrary, the doctrine of Reincarnation, after accepting all the truths and laws of nature that have been discovered by modern science, carries them to their proper

* Vide "Science and Christian Tradition," by Prof. Huxley, pp. 279—280.

logical conclusions. Reincarnation is based upon evolution. It means a continuous evolution of an individual germ of life, and a gradual re-manifestation of all the powers and forces that exist in it potentially. Moreover, the doctrine of Reincarnation is founded on the law of cause and effect. It teaches that the cause is not outside of the effect, but lies in the effect. The cause is the potential or unmanifested state of the effect, and effect is the actual or manifested cause. There is one current of infinite force or power constantly flowing in the ocean of reality of the universe, and appearing in the innumerable forms of waves. We call one set of waves the cause of another set, but in fact that which is the cause is the potentiality of the future effect and the actuality of a previous potential cause. The underlying current is one and the same throughout. Reincarnation denies the idea that the soul has come into existence all of a sudden or has been created for the first time, but it holds that it has been existing from the beginningless past, and will exist all through eternity. The individual soul enjoys or suffers according to the acts it performs. All enjoyment and suffering are but the reactions of our actions. Actions are the causes and the reactions are the results. Our present life is the result of our past actions, and our future will be the result of the present. The actions which we are now doing will not be lost. Do you think that the thought-forces of one life-time will end suddenly after death? No. They will be conserved and remain

potentially in the center and re-manifest under suitable conditions. Each human soul is nothing but a center of thought-force. This center is called in Sanskrit *Sūkshma Sarîra* or the subtle body of an individual. The subtle germ of life or, in other words, the invisible center of thought-forces, will manufacture a physical vehicle for expressing the latent powers that are ready for manifestation. This process will continue until the germ can express most perfectly all the powers that are coiled up in its invisible form. As the doctrine of Reincarnation is in agreement with all the physical laws, so it is based upon psychical, moral and ethical laws. As on the objective plane the law of action and reaction governs the objective phenomena, so on the subjective plane of consciousness, if the mental action or thought be good, the reaction will be good, and the reaction will be evil if the mental action be evil, because every action produces a similar reaction. A good reaction is one which makes us happy and brings pleasant sensations or peace of mind while an evil reaction brings suffering, unpleasant sensations, and makes one miserable. Thus Reincarnation makes us free agents for action, as well as for reaping the results or reactions of those actions. In fact, we mould our own nature, according to our desires, tendencies and works.

The theory of Resurrection, as commonly understood, does not explain why one man is born with a sinful nature and another with a virtuous one. It contents itself

with saying as Luther said : “ Man is a beast of burden who only moves as his rider orders ; sometimes God rides him and sometimes Satan.” But why God should allow Satan to ride His own creature nobody can tell. At any rate, man must suffer eternally for the crimes which he is forced by Satan to commit. Moreover this theory pre-supposes predestination and that the individual soul is foredoomed to go either to heaven or to hell. St. Augustine first started this doctrine of Predestination and Grace to explain why one is born sinful and another sinless. According to this theory, God, the merciful, favors somebody with His grace at the time of his birth and then he comes into this world ready to be saved, but the mass of humanity is born sinful and destined for eternal damnation. Very few indeed receive the gift of grace and are predestined to be saved. Moreover, this doctrine tells us that God creates man out of nothing, forbids him something, but at the same time He does not give him the power to obey His commands. Ultimately God punishes him with eternal torture on account of his weakness. The body and soul will not be separated. He will not be set free from his body, because, if it be so, there will be the end of his suffering, which God does not like. All these sufferings and punishments are predestined before his birth. Thus, St. Augustine's dogma of Predestination and Grace instead of explaining the difficulty satisfactorily brings horror and dread to human minds, while the doctrine of

Reincarnation teaches gradual progress from lower to higher, through ages until the individual reaches perfection. It holds that each individual will become perfect like Jesus or Buddha or like the Father in heaven and manifest divinity either in this life or in some other. One span of life is too short for developing one's powers to perfection. If you should try to train an idiot to become a great artist or a philosopher, would you ever succeed in your attempt to make him so during his lifetime ? No. And will you punish him because he cannot become so ? Can a man who possesses the slightest common sense be so unreasonable ? Similarly what would you think if God punishes a man because he cannot become perfect within a lifetime ? It is a poor argument to say that God has given us free-will to choose between right and wrong, and we are responsible for our choice ; if we choose wrongly we must be punished. The advocates of such an argument forget that at the same time God has let loose His powerful Satan to corrupt His creatures.

It reminds me of an old story. Once on a time at a certain place a prisoner was released and set free through the kindness of a tyrant. The tyrant said to the prisoner, " Look here, wicked man, I give you freedom, you can go to any place ; but there is one condition ; if you are attacked by any wild animal you will be put in the dungeon and there will be no end to your torture." So saying he gave him freedom, but at the same time ordered his servants to let loose a hungry wolf to chase the man.

You can imagine what became of the prisoner. Can we call this an act of mercy !

The doctrine of Reincarnation says that each individual soul is potentially perfect and is gradually unfolding its powers and making them actual through the process of Evolution. At every step of that process it is gaining different experiences which last only for a time. Therefore neither God nor Satan is responsible for our good or evil actions. Good and evil are like the up and down or the crest and hollow of a wave in the sea. A wave cannot rise without making a hollow somewhere in the sea. So in the infinite ocean of reality innumerable waves are constantly rising. The summit of each wave is called good, while the hollow beside it is evil or misery and the current of each individual life is constantly flowing towards the ultimate destination which we call perfection. Who can tell how long it will take to reach that goal ? If anybody can attain to perfection in this life, he is no longer bound to reincarnate. If he fails he will continue to progress by taking some other body. Reincarnation does not teach, as many people think, that in the next incarnation one will begin from the very beginning, but it says that one will start from that point which one reaches before death and will keep the thread of progress unbroken. It does not teach that we go back to animal bodies after death, but that we get our bodies according to our desires, tendencies and powers. If any person has no desire to come back to this world

or to any other and does not want to enjoy any particular object of pleasure, and if he is perfectly free from selfishness that person will not have to come back. The theory of Reincarnation is logical and satisfactory. While the theory of Resurrection is neither based on scientific truths nor can it logically explain the cause of life and death, Reincarnation solves all the problems of life and explains scientifically all the questions and doubts that arise in the human mind.

“ Reincarnation is not easily understood by a thoughtless child deluded by the delusion of wealth, name or fame. Everything ends with death, he thinks, and thus falls again and again under the sway of death.”

THEORY OF TRANSMIGRATION.

The theory of transmigration is one of the oldest theories accepted by the people of the Orient to solve the problems concerning life and death as well as to explain the continuity of existence after death. This theory presupposes the existence of the soul as an entity which can live even when the gross material body is dead or dissolved into its elements. Those who deny the existence of the soul, of the self-conscious thinker and actor, as an entity distinct from the gross material body, necessarily deny this theory of transmigration. The materialistic thinkers of all ages have refused to accept this theory, because they do not admit the existence of a soul or a self-conscious thinker and actor as an entity, separate from the gross material body. Consequently they do not ask or discuss whether the soul will exist after death or not, whether it will continue to live or not. Such materialists are not the creatures of the twentieth century, but they have lived in all ages, in all countries. In India and in other civilized countries of ancient times you will find that materialistic thinkers prevailed and they gave the same arguments which we hear now from the agnostics and scientists of to-day. Their arguments are generally one-sided and unsatisfactory. They try to

deduce the soul or self-conscious entity from the combination of matter or material forces, but they have not succeeded in giving a scientific proof of it. No arguments in favor of the existence of a soul as an entity will convince them, because they deny the existence of anything that cannot be perceived by sense powers. If we could bring the soul down on the sense plane and make it visible to these materialistic thinkers, and if they could make experiments upon it, then perhaps they would be convinced to a certain extent, but not until then. But how can we bring the soul down on the sense plane when it is ethereal and finer than anything that we can perceive with our senses?

Those who try to explain the cause of our earthly life by the theory of heredity do not believe in the truth of transmigration. The modern scientists, agnostics and materialists generally accept the theory of heredity, and endeavour to explain everything by it ; but if we examine their arguments for the theory of heredity, we shall find that the theory of transmigration is much more satisfactory, much more rational than that of heredity.

Among the followers of the great religions of the world, the majority of Christians, Jews, Mohammedans and Parsees deny the truth of transmigration. Of course, there was a time when the Christians believed in this transmigration theory. Origen and other Church Fathers accepted it until the time of Justinian, who anathematized all those who believed in Reincarnation or the

pre-existence of the soul. Among the Jews we find that in the Cabala this idea of transmigration plays the most important part. In fact the Cabalists accepted this theory to explain all the difficulties that could not be explained by any other theory. But those Jews, Christians, Mohammedans and Parsees who do not believe in the theory of transmigration accept the one-birth theory ; that is, that God creates the souls at the time of birth out of nothing, and these souls, having come into existence out of nothing, continue to live forever ; that this is our first and last birth that we receive ; we did not exist before, we are suddenly created by God, and after death each one of us will continue to live either in heaven or hell to enjoy or to suffer throughout eternity. Among the modern Spiritualists we find that those who are born and brought up with this idea of one birth do not accept the theory of transmigration. Still there are millions and millions of people all over the world who do believe in transmigration and who have found comfort and consolation in their lives as well as a satisfactory solution of the problems of life and death.

The theory of Transmigration, or Metempsychosis, as it has been called by many philosophers, originally meant the passing of a soul from one body after death into another ; or, in other words, it meant that the soul after dwelling in one particular body for a certain length of time leaves it at the time of death, and in order to gain experience enters into some other body, either human,

animal or angelic, which is ready to receive it. It may migrate from the human body to an angelic body and then come down on the human plane, or to the animal plane and be born again as an animal. So the original meaning of transmigration or metempsychosis was the revolution of the soul from body to body whether animal, human, angelic or of the gods. The migrating substance being a fixed quantity, with fixed qualities, chooses its form according to its taste, desire and bent of character. This idea prevailed among the ancient Egyptians, according to whom the soul, after leaving the dead body, would travel from one body to another for thousands and thousands of years in order to gain experiences in each of the different stages of life.

Among the Greek philosophers we find that Pythagoras, Plato and their followers believed in this theory of Metempsychosis or Transmigration of souls. Pythagoras says : " After death the rational mind, having been freed from the chains of the body, assumes an ethereal vehicle and passes into the region of the dead where it remains till it is sent back to this world to inhabit some other body human or animal. After undergoing successive purgations, when it is sufficiently purified, it is received among the gods and returns to the eternal source from which it first proceeded." Plato also believed in this theory. Of course we cannot tell exactly from whence Pythagoras and Plato got these ideas. Some say that they learned these doctrines from

Egypt ; others believe that, either directly or indirectly, they learned the theory of transmigration from India. Plato describes in "Phædrus," in mythological language, why and how the souls take their birth upon this plane, either as human or animal. He says : "In the heaven Zeus, the Father and Lord of all creatures, drives his winged car, ordering all things and superintending them. A host of deities and spirits follow him, each fulfilling his own function. Whoever will and can follows them. After taking this round, they advance by a steep course along the inner circumference of the heavenly vault and proceed to a banquet. The chariots of the gods, being well balanced and well driven, advance easily ; others with difficulty : for the vicious horse, unless the charioteer has thoroughly broken him, weighs down the car by his proclivity towards the earth, whereupon the soul is put to the extremity of toil and effort. The souls of gods reach the summit, go outside and stand upon the surface of heaven, and enjoy celestial bliss. Such is the life of the gods ; other souls which follow God best and are likeliest to Him succeed in seeing the vision of truth and in entering into the outer world with great difficulty. The rest of the souls longing after the upper world all follow ; but not being strong enough, they are carried round in the deep below, plunging, treading on one another, striving to be first, and there, in confusion and extremity of effort, many of them are lamed and have their wings broken. Thus when the

soul is unable to follow and fails to behold the vision of Truth, sinks beneath the double load of forgetfulness and vice, her feathers fall from her and she drops to earth and is born again and again as human beings or as animals." Plato says : " Ten thousand years must elapse before the soul can return to the place from whence she came, for she cannot grow her wings in less." "At the end of the first thousand years, the souls of the good and of the evil kind come together to draw lots, and choose their bodies according to their tendencies and the bent of their characters. They may take any they like." Instead of receiving the natural consequences of their deeds and misdeeds of their previous lives they are allowed to choose their own lot, according to their experience and bent of character. " Some being disgusted with mankind, prefer to be born as animals, such as lions and eagles or some other animals. Others delight in trying their luck as human beings." From this mythological description we gather what Plato meant by transmigration.

This Platonic idea of transmigration or of successive lives of those who inhabit this earth has been criticized by various thinkers of modern times ; and referring to this idea the late Doctor Myers, of the Psychical Research Society of London, writes in his second volume of " Human Personality " : " The simple fact that such was probably the opinion of both Plato and Virgil shows that there is nothing here which is alien to the best reason or to the highest instincts of men. Nor, indeed,

is it easy to realize any theory of the *direct creation* of spirits at such different stages of advancement as those which enter upon the earth in the guise of mortal man. There *must*, one feels, be some kind of continuity—some form of spiritual past” (P. 134). Why does He not create all souls equal ? Why will one soul be highly advanced spiritually while another is entirely ignorant and idiotic ? This question cannot be answered, this problem cannot be solved by the special creation theory, and therefore Doctor Myers says that there is no doubt that there ^{was} some previous continuity or spiritual past of each individual soul, and therefore he tacitly admits the theory of Transmigration. Although from a scientific viewpoint he could not give any direct proof regarding this idea of a pre-existence of the soul, still he could not deny it entirely when he said : “ The shaping forces which have made our bodies and our minds what they are may always have been psychical forces—from the ^{first} living slime-speck to the complex intelligences of to-day.” “ The old transmigrationist’s view would thus possess a share of truth and the actual man would be the resultant not only of intermingling heredities on father’s and mother’s sides, but of intermingling heredities, one of planetary and one of cosmic scope.” (“ Human Personality,” Vol. II, p. 267.)

But this theory of Transmigration, as described by Plato, is a little different from a similar theory which existed in India before his time. In the Platonic idea of

transmigration, as we have already seen, the souls were allowed to choose their own lot according to their experience or bent of character but not to receive the natural consequence of their deeds and misdeeds. Plato did not say anything about the law which governs souls ; but in ancient India the great thinkers and philosophers explained that each individual soul is bound by the inexorable law of nature to receive its body as a natural consequence of its former deeds and misdeeds, and not to have free choice of its lot according to its bent of character. The great thinkers and philosophers of ancient India discovered the universal law of cause and effect, of action and reaction, and called it by the Sanskrit term "Karma," which means the law of cause and sequence; that every cause must be followed by an effect of a similar nature, that every action must produce similar reaction, and conversely every reaction or effect is the result of an action or cause of a similar character. Thus there is always a balance and harmony between cause and effect, between action and reaction. This law of Karma has now become a fundamental verity of modern science. It is called by different names : the scientists call it the law of causation, the law of compensation, the law of retribution, the law of action and reaction, but they all refer to the same idea,—that every cause must produce a similar result and every action must produce a similar reaction.

Now these ancient thinkers of India applied this law

of Karma to explain the destiny of human souls, and it was upon this law they based the theory of Transmigration. They maintained that human souls are bound by this irresistible law and cannot get out of it; their thoughts and deeds are the causes which produce results of similar nature. So their future birth does not depend upon their whimsical, free choice, but it is limited by the thoughts and deeds or misdeeds of their previous lives. In the Platonic idea we find that the souls go according to their choice. They may not take a human form if they prefer an animal form, but in the Hindu idea of transmigration we find that it is not a result of free choice, but, if our thoughts and deeds force us to take a particular form, then we are subject to the law of Karma, which governs our future birth and the evolution of our souls. Consequently the Hindu theory of Transmigration differs fundamentally from the Platonic as well as from the Egyptian idea of Transmigration. In the Platonic and Egyptian theories we see that the souls, after leaving the body, enter into another body which is waiting to receive the migrating soul, but in the Hindu theory of Transmigration the body is not waiting to receive the migrating soul, but on the contrary the soul, being subject to the laws of evolution, manufactures the gross material body according to its desires and tendencies. Just as a germ of life will develop a grosser form by cellular subdivision, by growth, and by assimilation of the environmental conditions, so the germ of the human

soul will manufacture the body by obeying the laws which govern the physical plane. Parents are nothing but the channels through which the migrating souls receive their material forms. Parents do not create the souls ; they have no power to create. They can only give the suitable environments necessary for manufacturing a gross physical body. The souls come with their tendencies, with their desires, and they remain as germs of life.

Now these germs of life contain vital forces, sense powers, psychic powers, and ethereal particles of matter. At the time of death the soul contracts and withdraws all its powers from the sense organs to its innermost center, and in that contracted state it leaves the body. But these powers do not leave the soul. By the law of persistence of force and conservation of energy they remain latent in that center until environmental conditions become favorable for their remanifestation. Rebirth means the manifestation of the latent powers which exist in the germ of life or in the individual soul. These germs of life are called by different names. Leibnitz called them monads and modern scientists call them bioplasms or some such name, but the Vedanta philosophers describe them as subtle bodies. These germs or subtle bodies are subject to evolution and growth; they arise from lower to higher stages of development, from the mineral through the vegetable to the animal kingdom and eventually they become human beings and then they go on progressing.

In the Platonic theory the idea of progress, growth or gradual evolution of the soul from the lower to higher stages of existence is entirely excluded, because, as I have already said, the migrating substance is of a fixed quantity with fixed qualities, that is, these qualities do not change and are not affected by either growth or evolution. They are constant quantities. In order to differentiate these two ideas we should call the Hindu theory of Transmigration by the term "Reincarnation." The Hindu or Vedantic theory of Reincarnation, however, is not the same as the Buddhistic theory of Rebirth, for the Buddhists do not believe in the permanence of the soul entity. There is another point where the Reincarnation theory differs from Platonic transmigration. According to this theory of Reincarnation there is growth and evolution of each individual soul from the lower to higher stages of development. The soul or germ of life, after passing through the lower stages, comes to the human plane and gains experience and knowledge; and after coming to the human plane, it does not retrograde to animal bodies. The Platonic theory teaches that human souls migrate into animal bodies or angelic bodies and return from the angelic to the human or the animal, and that some of them prefer to become animals; while the theory of Reincarnation, taking its stand upon the scientific truth of gradual evolution, teaches that the human souls have already passed through different grades of the animal, nay, of the vegetable kingdom, by the

natural process of evolution. After having once received the human organism, why should a soul choose to go back to the lesser and more imperfect organism of an animal? How is it possible for a lesser manifestation to hold a greater one? Why should a greater manifestation choose more limited forms in preference to those of others? This question arises in the Platonic theory of Transmigration. Therefore, the Reincarnation theory, or the theory of Transmigration according to the Hindus, rejects this idea of the going back of human souls to animal forms. We have already passed in the evolutionary process through the lower grade of animal organisms. Now that we have outgrown them why should we go back to them?

It is true, however, that in India there are many uneducated people among the Hindus who believe that human souls do migrate into animal bodies after death to gain experience and reap the results of their wicked deeds, being bound by the law of Karma; but in the Platonic theory the law of Karma plays no part in the transmigration of souls. The educated and thoughtful minds of India, however, accept the more rational and scientific theory of Reincarnation. Although there are passages in the scriptural writings of the Hindus which apparently refer to the retrogression of the human soul into animal nature, still such passages do not necessarily mean that the souls will be obliged to take animal bodies. They may live like animals even when they have human

bodies, as we may find among us many people like cats and dogs and snakes in human form and they are often more vicious than natural cats, dogs or snakes. They are reaping their own Karma and manifesting their animal nature, though physically they look like human beings. This kind of retrogression is possible for one who after reaching the human plane goes backward on account of wicked thoughts and deeds on the animal plane. Such a temporary retrogression brings knowledge and helps it in its onward progress toward the manifestation of higher powers on the higher plane of consciousness. All the wicked thoughts and wicked deeds are nothing but the results of our own mistakes. What is sin ? Sin is nothing but a mistake and it proceeds from ignorance. For instance, if I do not know that fire burns, I may put my finger into it and get burned. The result of this mistake is the burning of the finger and this has taught me once for all that fire burns ; I shall never again put my finger into fire. So every mistake is a great teacher in the long run. No one is born so high and perfect as not to commit any mistake or any sin. Every mistake like this opens our eyes to the laws of the universe by bringing to us such results as we do not desire. As one life is not enough to gain experience in all the stages of evolution, we must have to admit the doctrine of the Reincarnation of the soul for the fulfilment of the ultimate purpose of earthly life. Professor Huxley says : “ None but hasty thinkers will reject it on the ground of

inherent absurdity. Like the doctrine of evolution itself that of transmigration has its roots in the world of reality."

DIVINE HERITAGE
OF MAN

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

"That which exists is one: men call it by various names."—
Rig Veda, I, 164, 46.

Human minds seem to have almost exhausted their reasoning powers in producing all kinds of arguments that can be given both for and against the existence of God. For hundreds of years philosophers, scientists, and theologians among all nations have been bringing forward proofs either to show that there is such a Being as God or to deny His existence entirely. Of course most of the arguments and proofs in favour of the existence of God are convincing to those who already have some sort of belief in the Creator or some conception of the Supreme Being. If we have been brought up in an atmosphere where there prevails a belief in God as the Creator and Ruler of the universe or as an extra-mundane Being who, dwelling outside of nature, commands everything and directs the movements of the world, then unconsciously we breathe in and imbibe that belief from our childhood, and as we grow older we accept all the arguments and evidences that we can find in support of this preconceived idea.

If we have already a conception of God as the First

Cause, then all the inductions and inferences which maintain that idea will naturally appeal to us and we shall take them for granted. But those whose minds are not biased or influenced by any such idea, belief, or conception, those who are able to examine these proofs critically in the light of modern science, applying logic and reason, and those who freely investigate nature, searching for an extra-cosmic creator and ruler of the universe, may fail to find any convincing proof, and may therefore deny the existence of God, as such, or as the First Cause of all.

We all know how the theory of evolution has revolutionized the old idea of the special creation of the world out of nothing at some definite period of time. Those who found consolation in the design theory and held it to be the most unassailable ground in favour of the existence of an Omnipotent Designer, are now hopelessly discouraged by the introduction of the Darwinian theories of natural selection and sexual selection. By these theories we can explain almost all the so-called designs of the Creator. Moreover, the design argument cannot make clear why under the government of a just, omnipotent, and omniscient Ruler should happen such disorders as the volcanic eruptions on the Island of Martinique, or as the plagues, famines, and other disasters which devastate different countries, destroying hundreds of thousands of innocent living creatures. The design theory cannot trace the

causes of such disasters ; for if there were a Designer, His design should be perfect and there should be harmony instead of discord.

The monotheistic religions have tried to explain the cause of all the disorders that occur in the universe by a theory of a Creator of evil as distinct and separate from the Designer of good. This method of explanation, however, does not help us much in proving the existence of a perfect, all-powerful and infinite God, for we shall then have to admit two beings, one the creator of good and the other the creator of evil, which will make each limited by the other and will take away all idea of the omnipotency and infinity of the Supreme Being.

Those who believe that God is the First Cause of the universe, must determine the nature of that first cause—whether He is the efficient or the material cause. We know that these two causes are essential for the production of a thing, as, in the case of a pot, the potter is the efficient and the earth is the material cause. Now if we say that God is the efficient or instrumental cause of the universe, like the maker of a pot, then it would have been impossible for him to create without the help of the material cause, which must have co-existed with the Creator. Here we are confronted with the same difficulty—that God who stands outside the material cause, is limited by matter, therefore He cannot be unlimited in the proper sense of the term. If, on the contrary, the material cause be meant by First Cause, then He must

have gone through all the changes of evolution, which would make Him like a changeable, phenomenal object of the universe, a conclusion which we cannot accept.

The moral argument that the moral laws presuppose a law-giver cannot prove the existence of God, since we know that natural laws do not presuppose a law-giver. In the first place we should understand what "law" means. The forces of nature are operating in the universe in certain modes, and when the regularity and uniformity of these modes are observed and interpreted by the human mind, they are called "laws"; consequently these laws are to be found neither in nature nor outside of it, but in the human mind. Secondly, as in external nature the natural forces acting under regular modes do not presuppose a law-giver, so it can be shown that the moral laws are but modes in which natural forces operate on the moral plane; that they do not need a moral law-giver, but their process is the same as the evolutionary process of the physical world. Furthermore, all such conceptions of God as the natural law-giver or the moral law-giver are rejected by advanced thinkers as the anthropomorphic ideas of uncultured minds.

All these proofs and many other arguments like these which were considered to be sufficient to establish the existence of an extra-cosmic creator, ruler, or law-giver of the universe, are now thrown aside as imperfect and fallacious. In these days of science and reason when we

try to prove the existence of God, we do not search for a creator or fashioner of the world, for a designer or first cause of the phenomenal universe ; neither do we look for a moral law-giver ; our conception of God has outgrown those stages of evolution and has become as large as the infinity of the universe. We no longer think that this earth is the stationary centre around which the sun, moon and other luminaries of the heavens revolve, moved by the supernatural power of angels, who, according to the old-fashioned belief, dwelt above the blue dome of the sky overhead and moved these planets according to their whims and fancies. We are just beginning to understand the vastness of the universe. Modern astronomy has opened our eyes to the fact that this earth which we inhabit is to be considered as an infinitesimal point when compared with the immensity of space and with the innumerable cosmic bodies that exist above the horizon. We have learned that there are heavenly bodies beyond our solar system, the nearest one of which is so distant from us that its light, travelling at the rate of one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles per second, requires three and a half years to reach our earth. There are other stars so remote that thousands of years are needed for their light, travelling at the same rate, to arrive at our planet. We are assured that more than one thousand million stars have been discovered by the telescope and that there may be millions and millions of suns which are yet beyond the reach of our best instruments.

Thus, as far as we can get by stretching our imagination we do not find any limit or boundary to the universe ; we still have the feeling that there is something beyond. This sense of something existing beyond what we know and perceive is always with us ; we cannot get rid of it. Even when we try to perceive a finite object, that sense of beyond is most intimately connected with our perception and conception of it. There is a feeling of the infinite very closely associated with all our ideas and concepts. Take, for instance, the geometrical figure, a square ; when we try to perceive that square, we can only perceive it by perceiving the space beyond it. We see it as a figure enclosed by four straight lines, but at the same time there is a feeling of the space beyond, otherwise we could not perceive the square.

Again when we look at the space which is circumscribed by the horizon we do not lose the sense that there is something beyond that limit, that infinite space extends beyond the visible horizon. The same perception of limitlessness or of the infinite is closely associated with the idea of time. We cannot conceive either its beginning or its end. There always remains the sense of the eternal beyond both before and after our conception of time. In this way we get the perception of eternity. The human mind is so peculiarly constituted that it is incapable of finding the absolutely defined limit of any thing of the world. Trees, mountains, rivers, earth, sun, moon, and all other objects of the senses are tangible,

but do we find any definite limit when we carefully analyze our perceptions of these objects? No, we do not. We may try our best, but we are sure to discover, sooner or later, that there is a sense of beyond constantly attached to them.

Let us take an illustration: suppose that we stand under a big oak tree; we may look at it, touch it, or smell it, but can we perceive the absolute limit of that tree? Do our senses take in the whole tree at one time? No, our senses cannot reach its deepest roots or its highest branches, nor do we know what is going on under the bark or in the leaves. It is impossible for any one to take in the whole tree at one time; we may take it in by parts, but at the same time the perception of each part will under all circumstances leave in our minds the sense of beyond. Again when we think of the innumerable atoms and molecules that make up the body of that tree, its finite form vanishes leaving an impression that what we call "tree" is indeed an expression of the infinite; for when the form is gone, that which is left of the tree is inseparable from the infinite ocean of some substance imperceptible to the senses. Moreover, when we try to know the power or force that gives form to that tree and makes it living, which cannot be separated from it, then in one sense we must say that the tree has in it something intangible, mysterious and unknowable; we cannot help it.

In the same manner it can be shown that every finite

perception or conception of an object brings with it a sense of beyond, a perception of the infinite, or something that is unknown and unknowable, of something that is eternal. Take a drop of water which is finite ; put it under the microscope and you will see infinitesimal atoms moving about, some clearly visible, some so minute that they are hardly perceptible with the help of the most powerful microscope. Yet modern chemistry tells us that we can ascertain the relative position of these atoms so minute that millions upon millions of them could stand upon the point of a needle. Is not the infinitude of this small drop of water as wonderful as the infinity of space ? Indeed the drop of water is finite and infinite at the same time. When we see a flower, or touch it, we cannot help realizing in the same way that it is the finite appearance of that something which we cannot know, which is infinite and eternal. It is like a beautiful painting upon the canvas of that eternal invisible substance of the universe which the senses cannot perceive, which the mind cannot grasp or comprehend ; it is the expression of that infinite matter which fills all space. No one can deny the existence of this substance which appears to our senses in an infinite variety of forms and shapes.

Modern science tells us that this all-pervading substance of the universe has neither beginning nor end, because we cannot know its limit either in space or in time. As far back as we can go in our conception of time, we find that

the sense of beyond is present ; it is therefore eternal, that is, beginningless and endless. It is neither increased nor diminished by anything ; we cannot add one iota to this substance, nor can we subtract anything from it ; it is consequently unchangeable in quantity as well as in quality. It is all-powerful because all the forces manifested in the perceptible world proceed from and rest upon that unlimited substance. We may call it by whatever name we like ; it is the real essence of all phenomena. It is like the ocean upon which the waves of phenomenal forms are rising and, after playing their parts, are disappearing again and again. All these forms of sun, or moon, or stars, of human beings or animals, are nothing but waves in that infinite ocean. As the waves cannot exist without the ocean, so finite objects cannot exist without the infinite substance which is behind and beyond all phenomena. That infinite substance is the support of the universe ; it is one because it is infinite ; if the infinite were many, it would lose its limitless nature and become finite.

Ever since the dawn of intellect upon the horizon of the human mind there has been a constant struggle for a definite knowledge of this something which is beyond all finite existence and yet is not finite. The human mind cannot rest contented with the mere play of appearances, but always yearns to know what it is that appears. From ancient times those who have had some kind of perception of this infinite as related to the phenomenal universe have

also tried to express their ideas by giving different names to it. Thus have arisen the various names by which human minds have designated this infinite substance ; but each of these names now stands like a landmark in the path of the evolution of the conception of God. Whether we call that infinite substance God, or Creator, or Designer, or First Cause, or the Father, or Jehovah, or Allah, or Brahman, we mean the same infinite, eternal, all-powerful and unchangeable Substance. Every individual has a vague perception of this infinite around him or her ; some are more conscious of it than others. The more that we are dissatisfied and discontented with finite things, the stronger grows in us the desire to know more about this infinite, to understand more about that something which is not finite, which is beyond finite time and beyond limited space. When we find no pleasure, no satisfaction, no happiness in objects limited by time and space, and when we realize the transitoriness of all that is finite, our inner nature longs for that which is absolutely unlimited, and we wish to know where it is and how it is. We seek it here and there, not knowing exactly what we want ; we struggle for knowledge ; and this struggle, this search for that Infinite Being, grows stronger and stronger until the realization of the true nature of the infinite is obtained.

To a materialist who studies the objective side of the universe, this infinite substance appears as material and insentient ; he calls it matter, and tries to deduce this

phenomenal world from this infinite unintelligent matter. The matter of the materialist, however, is as infinite, as eternal, as all-powerful as the God or the Supreme Being of the religionists. A materialist simply studies the objective world and does not recognize or study the subjective universe ; therefore he is satisfied with his conclusions ; but as the objective side is only one-half of the universe, his conclusions are one-sided. Those who, on the contrary, study subjective nature, discover the same infinite behind their limited minds, beyond every idea, thought, feeling, or sensation. The finite mind is that which takes the forms of thoughts, ideas, feelings, sensations, and which is limited by the sense of "I". When however, we try to think of the definite boundary of the sense of "I" or of the finite mind, we cannot find it ; we fail to trace the beginning or end of that which thinks, or feels, or perceives, or conceives, or imagines. We realize that as physical forms are like the waves in the infinite ocean of eternal space filled with substance, so thoughts, ideas, feelings, sensations are but so many waves in the infinite ocean of mental space filled with finer substance. As we cannot attach the sense of "I" to our physical form, so we cannot call these mental forms our own. Thus after careful study the students of the subjective world come to the conclusion that the subjective infinite is the Reality of the universe, and that external phenomena are but the representations or projections of the subjective infinite, or mind. According to them time

and space do not exist outside the mind, consequently everything in space and time is like a picture of the subjective idea. They deny the existence of matter and trace the origin of all qualities or powers of the finite mind to that infinite mind. They give the attribute of intelligence to it and call it the eternal, intelligent, cosmic mind. The existence of infinite mind is as undeniable as that of infinite matter. But this substance, whether we call it mind or matter, subject or object, is the one unknowable Being of the universe. All mental as well as all physical forms are but its appearances. It is called in Sanskrit *Brahman*. From this infinite and eternal Brahman we have come into existence ; in It we live and into It we return at the end of phenomenal existence.

In ancient India the question was asked, "What is God ?" The answer we find in Vedanta : "That from which all animate and inanimate objects have come into existence, in which they live and play like waves in the sea, and into which they return ultimately at the time of dissolution, know that to be Brahman, or the infinite Substance, or God." Who can live without being sustained by this Infinite One ? As a painting cannot stand without the background, so phenomena cannot exist without being supported by the infinite Substance or Brahman. It pervades the universe, interpenetrating atoms and molecules, yet it lies beyond all the mental and physical phenomena of the manifested universe. It

is not confined by the limitations of sex or gender ; we may call this Being he, she, or it. This infinite substance or Brahman is incomprehensible and unknowable to finite minds. That to which the modern agnostics refer when they use the term " Unknowable " is the same Infinite Being.

Here we must not forget the meaning of the verb " to know." In its ordinary sense " to know " means first to perceive through the senses and then to form a concept of the object perceived. Consequently, all our knowledge is limited by the power of perception as well as by the mind. To know God or the Infinite Being by the same kind of knowledge as that by which we know a stone or a tree or dog would be tantamount to annihilating God. Because a known God in this sense would cease to be God; He would become a phenomenal object, an idol, and not the Infinite Being, for in trying to know God, we would be bringing that Infinite Being within the limits of our finite mind. In this sense, therefore, God, or the Infinite Being, is always unknown and unknowable. Shall we then join the agnostics and be contented with our ignorance and powerlessness to know the Infinite? Shall we cease from all our attempts and struggles to understand the nature of the Infinite or to know the existence of God when He is unknowable? No. Here is a great fact to learn, that although the Infinite Being is unknown and unknowable according to the point of view of modern agnosticism, He

is more than known, more than knowable from the standpoint of the Vedanta. He is the essence of our being, the essence of our Self. He is the source of our knowledge. All knowledge proceeds from that infinite Wisdom; when we know a thing, we know it in and through Him. When, for instance, we know a table, we say that the table is known, but can we trace the source of this knowledge? Do we know from where it comes? It is not created by us. It is eternal; it exists in the infinite mind, or that something behind the finite mind, and through that knowledge we say that the table is known. When we say that ether is unknown and unknowable, we use this same knowledge as our guide. That by which we are able to cognize a thing and to call it known or unknown is Divinity itself. Therefore whether we know a thing or do not know it, knowledge in either case is possible only through the one source of all wisdom and consciousness.

It is for this reason that God is more than anything known and knowable or anything unknown and unknowable. He is infinitely higher than either. He is the essence of the ego or "I"; no one can live without being sustained by that infinite source of existence, knowledge, and consciousness. It is not that God dwells somewhere outside of the universe and from there is making my blood circulate or my heart beat, but He is in every cell of my body. He fills the space of my form. I owe my existence to Him. He is the Soul of my soul as well as

the Soul of the universe. He is in you, in me, in the chair, in the wall and everywhere, yet we do not see or know Him. It would be a great degradation of God if He could be known by our ordinary knowledge. He would then be like a changeable, limited, phenomenal something such as we perceive with our senses; whereas He is in fact the Knower of the universe, the Eternal Subject who knows everything in each of us. The Knower or the Subject in us is unchangeable, eternal and one.

When we understand that by knowledge is meant objectification, we realize that all our attempts to express that infinite Subject in language—to call Him Father, Brother, or dearest Friend—are nothing but so many efforts of the human mind to objectify the infinite, unlimited Subject of the universe. We cannot, however, remain satisfied with this imperfect knowledge of Divinity; we desire to know more about the Infinite Being. Gradually we may come to realize that He is the Creator of the world, the Governor of all, or the First Cause of the universe. But here again we shall not rest content; we shall still wish to know more about Him. Then we shall find that the same Infinite Substance or Being which is beyond every finite object, beyond space and time, above mind and body, is in reality not very far from us; wherefore it is said in the Vedanta :

“He is far from us, yet He is nearer than the nearest; He dwells in everything, yet He is outside the pheno-

menal universe; He is infinitely smaller than the atom of an atom, yet He is infinitely larger than the largest solar system, than the space which covers the perceptible universe."

When we see the sun, moon or stars, we see that part of the Infinite which is visible to our eyes; when we hear a sound, we perceive that part of the Infinite which is audible to our ears; but God is in reality beyond light, sound, odor, taste or touch. He is the same Infinite Substance which transcends time and space, mind and sense powers. By knowing so much of the Infinite, however, we are yet unsatisfied, we still desire to know more. Our souls still long for a deeper knowledge of that all-pervading Substance. The more we study phenomenal objects the less are we content with the knowledge that we can gather from this study. We may devote the whole of our lives and spend all the energy we possess in trying to satisfy this craving for knowledge of the Infinite by studying the phenomenal world, but this thirst for knowledge will not be quenched; it will remain, as it does in all the great thinkers of the world. We may read books, philosophies, sciences, and Scriptures, but the longing of the soul will never be fulfilled by reading books. There is only one way to quench this thirst and that is by realizing the Infinite.

The word "realize" means something more than ordinary knowing. By "realizing" we mean being and becoming one with the Infinite. If we can know that the

all-pervading Being is the Essence of our lives and the Soul of our souls, we become more and more acquainted with that Infinite and understand its whole nature—not the objective side alone, not merely as the material substance, but as the infinite mind substance, and also as that which transcends this substance of mental phenomena. I mean when we have realized the Infinite Spirit, when we have found that It is the source of all powers and forces as well as the basis of our consciousness, the foundation of our existence, the life and the reality of the universe, then the thirst for knowledge is quenched, then all questions regarding the existence of God are answered, all doubts cease forever.

But it may be asked : How can we know the Supreme Being as the Soul of our souls ? By rising above the plane of consciousness of the finite. This plane of consciousness will never reveal the true nature of the Infinite Being because it functions within the limitations of the senses, consequently it cannot reach the infinite which is above all limits. We may have a vague perception of it or we may think of it as the subject or object, as mind or matter; but that is not the same as the realization of the Absolute One. If we can rise above time and space, shutting out all sense objects, making the mind impervious to all sensations of external objects, if we can then direct the whole energy of mind and soul towards the Infinite within us, then we shall be able to realize the Soul of our souls, then the truth of the

existence of God will be revealed to us.

If we wish to know God, we shall have to enter into the state of superconsciousness. All the great spiritual leaders of the world, Jesus the Christ, Buddha, Râmakrishna, and others, who preached the existence of God, first realized Him by entering into the state of superconsciousness. Those who have studied Râja Yoga* and have practised it will understand what superconsciousness means. All revelation and inspiration come in that state. The longing for more knowledge has led the river of the soul into the ocean of Infinite Wisdom. In that state the individual soul realizes the blissfulness which is beyond the reach of ordinary mortals, which cannot be obtained by wealth, property, or worldly prosperity. Friends and relatives cannot help us in rising to that blissful condition. It is a state attaining which nothing remains unattainable, realizing which the true nature of everything is revealed. It is a state in which no desire remains unfulfilled, in which the individual soul, transcending all limitations, becomes one with the Infinite and enjoys unbounded happiness both here and hereafter. Such a knower of the Infinite says :

" I have attained everything that is to be attained, I have realized all that can be realized. I have known that Infinite Being that is worshipped under different names by different nations as God, or Father in heaven,

* " Râja Yoga," by Swami Vivekananda. Published under the auspices of the Vedanta Society of New York.

or Allah, or Buddha, or Christ, or Divine Mother, or Brahman."

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

"The Supreme Spirit is devoid of the defining attributes of form, color, etc. He is unchangeable, unborn, eternal, indestructible, imperishable and is always of one nature. He is pure and the repository of all blessed qualities."—Vishnu Purana.

God is described in the different Scriptures as a spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, true and one; the omnipotent and omniscient creator and governor of the universe, and the repository of all blessed qualities, such as justice, goodness, mercy, and love. If we ask a Christian, a Jew, a Mahometan, a Parsee, a Hindu, or a follower of any other sect or creed what is his conception of God, each one of them will quote passages from his Scriptures giving the same attributes to the Divine Being, whom they worship under various names—such as Father in heaven, Jehovah, Allah, Ahura Mazda, or Brahman. The names may vary but the attributes of God are with each exactly the same.

A catholic priest who bows down before the image of Jesus the Christ and prays to Him, who burns incense and lights candles ; a protestant clergyman who does not believe in bowing down before any image ; a Mahometan priest who is a fanatical iconoclast and denies all forms of God ; or a Hindu priest who worships an ido l

in a temple, invariably agree with one another in describing the attributes of the God they worship. There is no difference between the God of a Christian or a Mahometan, of a Parsee or a Hindu, because each of them believes that God is infinite and one.

How can there be many Gods when their attributes are the same and identical everywhere? Yet a Christian calls the Hindu a heathen, and a Mahometan calls a Christian an unbeliever, and each in turn quarrels with the other. Why is there so much persecution if God is one? Because of the ignorance of His believers. They do not even try to understand the true meaning of any of the attributes which they give to God; their eyes are blinded by ignorance, fanaticism and bigotry. Stimulated by false belief and superstition, they maintain that their God is the only true God, while the God of other nations is untrue, and they cannot see that every one worships the same Infinite Being. Fanatical Christians preach: "Beware of the God of the heathen, He cannot give salvation to His worshippers"; as if there were *two* Gods.

Ignorance is the mother of fanaticism, bigotry, superstition, and of all that springs from them. Fanatics cannot realize that God is the common property of all, that whether He be worshipped by a Christian or by a Hindu, He is one, because His attributes are identical. Among those who are not so fanatical there are many who give the same attributes to God without, however,

understanding their true meaning. Ninety per cent. of monotheists all over the world say : " God is infinite and one," but at the same time they think of some being with a human form sitting somewhere outside of universe. If we ask them the meaning of the word " infinite," their answers are often full of illogical nonsense. They will make God as finite as possible and bring forward all sorts of fallacious arguments to support their position.

Those who believe in a personal God, give Him a human form, human attributes and a human personality without realizing that they are making their Lord limited in power, personality and attributes. Of course it is not their fault ; it is quite natural that they should think of the Ruler of the universe as a human being, because we are all human and the limit of our conception is a human being. Our world is a human world, our God must be a human God, and our explanation of the universe must also be human. Having seen the governor of a country, who is a human being with certain powers, we form a concept and keep it in our minds when we conceive the Supreme Being as the governor of the universe. Naturally we give Him a human form and a human personality, only with this difference—that the governor of the country is limited in power, size, and qualifications, while the Ruler of the universe is unlimited in power and immensely magnified in size, and qualifications ; yet however great He may be, He

must still appear more or less like a human being. In this way our explanation of the universe has become human, and our God has acquired a human form and personality. If a cow became a philosopher and had a religion, her conception of God would be in cow form, her explanation of the universe would be through that cow God. She would not be able to comprehend our Lord at all. Similarly if a tiger had a God, his conception would be of a tiger form. If there be a being with a form different from ours, with a nature higher than ours, his God will be like himself. As we do not know what conception of God the people of Mars have, we cannot know their God; if they are not like human beings, their conception will differ from ours. So none of these pictures of God and none of these explanations of the universe can be complete in itself. It may be a partial truth, but not the whole truth. Therefore all those conceptions of God which we so often hear—that He is like a human being sitting on a throne outside the universe and from there governing the universe by His powers, are incomplete and imperfect.

But ordinary people do not see this. Each is sure that his conception and explanation are the best. They cannot realize how there can be anything higher or greater than what they already believe. Yet when they are asked, what are the attributes of such a human God, they will say: "He is a spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, true and one; He is the omniscient and

omnipotent creator and the repository of all blessed qualities." Thus they unconsciously make God finite and infinite at the same time. Can there be anything more absurd and self-contradictory than a finite infinite God ! If He is finite, he is limited by time, space and causation, must have a beginning and end, and cannot be unchangeable. A finite God must be changeable and must perish like all mortal things. Are we ready to believe in such a perishable God ? Not for a moment. We cannot give any form to God because form means limitation in space by time. By giving a form to God, we make Him subject to time, space and the law of causation, consequently we make Him mortal like any other object of the phenomenal universe which has form. God with a form cannot be immortal and eternal, He must die. Therefore we cannot say that God is finite or that He has any form.

He is infinite. But let us have a clear understanding of the meaning of this word "infinite," and use it in its proper sense. That which is not limited by time and space and not subject to the law of causation, which is above time, space, and beyond all laws is infinite. God is not limited by time or space, neither has He any cause. He is absolute. The infinite again must be one, otherwise it is finite. If there be any other thing beside that infinite then it is no longer infinite ; it is limited by that object, consequently it has become finite. Thus if we admit that God is infinite, we deny the existence of any

other thing besides God; otherwise He would be limited by that thing, and be subject to time, space and the law of causation.

If we say that matter exists separate from and outside of God, we have made Him limited by matter, we have made Him finite and perishable. If we think of ourselves as separate from God, as independent of His Being, then in our thought we have denied His illimitable nature. There is for the same reason, not a single particle of matter in the universe that can exist independent of God's existence or outside of God; if He is infinite and one, our bodies and every thing of the universe from the minutest atom to the largest planetary system, from the lowest animalcule to the highest Being, exists in and through that Infinite Existence. This may be startling to many, but the fact cannot be denied. If we wish to be logical, if the word "infinite" conveys any meaning at all, we cannot avoid the logical conclusion which must inevitably follow. If, on the contrary, we use the word "infinite" meaning something finite, how foolish and illogical shall we be! The conclusion is this: If God is infinite and one, then mind and matter, subject and object, creator and creation, and all relative dual existences are within that Being, and not outside of it. The whole universe is in God and God is in it; it is inseparable from God. I am in Him and He is in me; each one of us is inseparable from His being; if one

atom of my body exists, that existence cannot be separated from His existence.

We have now understood the meaning of the two attributes infinite and one. Let us examine the meaning of other attributes. God is unchangeable, that is, He is always the same and never subject to any change whatsoever, because He is eternal, without beginning or end. That which has a beginning must have an end and go through all the changes of birth, growth, decay and death ; everything that has a beginning must grow, decay and die. That which is limited by time and space must go through all these changes, which, on the contrary, never affect the infinite Being.

God is a spirit. What is to be understood by spirit ? It does not mean a shadowy form or an apparition. By this term is meant pure, self-luminous intelligence, the source of all consciousness, the basis and foundation of all knowledge, the background of mind and matter, of subject and object. Again He is true. That which is not God is untrue or unreal ; or, in other words, that which is finite, manifold, changeable, non-eternal, transitory, is untrue and unreal. Furthermore, God is omnipresent and omniscient, and upon Him depends the existence of mind and matter, of subject and object. Let us understand this a little more clearly. Whatever exists in the universe, whether mental or physical, subjective or objective, can exist only as related to a self-conscious intelligence. When we analyze our percep-

tions, we find that that which is not related to any state of our consciousness does not exist in relation to us, because we do not know anything about it. Existence and knowledge or consciousness are inseparable.

As our small worlds of which we are conscious, exist in relation to our conscious being, so the phenomenal universe can only exist as being related to the knowledge of the cosmic knower or the universal Being ; otherwise there cannot be any existence, because existence and knowledge, existence and consciousness are inseparable ; therefore God is called omniscient or all-knowing. Nothing exists without being related directly to the intelligence and knowledge of the infinite Being. As this infinite Being pervades the universe and interpenetrates every particle of matter, giving existence to everything, so the light of His knowledge pervades the universe ; therefore He is omnipresent and omniscient. If these various conceptions, obtained by analyzing the attributes of God, be summed up, we shall learn that God is the Absolute Being, eternal, true and everlasting, the one infinite ocean of self-existent, self-luminous intelligence which is the source of all consciousness. Nothing can exist outside of or independent of that one omnipresent and omniscient Being of the universe.

Here a question arises,—if there be no other being beside God, what will become of the diverse phenomena of the universe, which we perceive with our senses ? Do they not exist ? Yes, they do, but their existence de-

pend upon God. They have no separate and independent existence ; they are like froth, bubbles and waves on that infinite ocean of intelligence. As a wave cannot exist for a moment independent of the ocean, so the phenomena of the world depend for their existence upon the Absolute Being.

This ocean of pure self-luminous intelligence and existence is described in Vedanta by the word *Brahman*, which means absolute existence and intelligence, the unlimited source of knowledge and of consciousness ; while the power which produces these waves of phenomena is called *Mâya*. This inscrutable power of *Maya* dwells in the infinite ocean of Reality or Brahman from eternity to eternity. It is as inseparable from the Divine Being as the power of burning is inseparable from fire. Sometimes this power remains latent as undifferentiated cosmic energy and sometimes it manifests itself as the various forces of nature. When that power is latent, all phenomena disappear, and dissolution or involution takes place ; but when it begins to express itself as natural forces, it produces the waves and bubbles of phenomena in the ocean of Brahman. Then the Absolute Being seen through the active or manifesting power of *Maya* or cosmic energy, appears as the creator and governor of the universe.

He is called in Sanskrit "Iswara," which means also the creator and ruler of the universe. He is the first-born lord, or the cosmic ego. This cosmic ego, the Iswara

or lord, is called the creator of the universe. Here let us understand clearly in what sense God can be properly called the creator of the world. Does He create it out of nothing as described in the monotheistic and dualistic Scriptures of the Christians, Jews, Mahometans, and Parsees ? No. He does not create anything out of nothing ; He is not the creator in that sense. In the first place we must not forget the truth, discovered and established by ancient and modern science, that something cannot come out of nothing, consequently to a scientific mind creation out of nothing has no meaning. The theory of a special creation of the world as we read in Genesis has been proved to be an unscientific myth. Secondly, the doctrine of evolution is now so unquestionably established that we can safely accept it in the place of the mythical story of special creation. Therefore when we speak of God as the creator of the universe, we do not mean one who brought the world into existence out of nothing as our forefathers understood by this expression ; but applying the light of science and being guided by the reasoning of the Vedanta philosophy, we must understand that Iswara is called the creator because He projects out of His own being the powers existing there potentially and makes them active. Thus the word creator means the projector of all forces and of all phenomenal forms which potentially existed as eternal energy in Iswara. That projection from the potential into the kinetic or active state takes place gradually

through the process of the evolution of the Mâyâ or the cosmic energy which dwells in the Iswara of Vedanta. Vedanta teaches that although Brahman or the Absolute Being or Godhead is above all activity, still the Iswara is full of power and action. He starts the evolution of the cosmic energy which before the beginning of the cyclic evolution held all phenomenal names and forms in its bosom. Iswara, according to Vedanta, is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe. He does not create matter, but matter is only a certain state or mode of motion of the universal Divine energy. When the dormant power of Mâyâ begins to manifest, all material forms commence to appear.

The next attribute of Iswara is that of ruler or governor of the universe. How does He govern ? Does he govern the world from outside, as it is said in the Christian Scriptures ? No, He governs from within and never from without. He is the *Antar-yamin*, the internal ruler of the universe. As the soul is the internal ruler of the body, so Iswara, being the soul of the universe, governs it from within and not from outside.

He is the repository of all blessed qualities, that is, all that is good, all that is great, all that is sublime, is but the expression of the Divine power. | But God Himself is above good and evil, beyond virtue and vice, above all relativity and beyond all conditions. He loves all beings equally and impartially ; He does not love one nation for certain qualifications and hate other

nations, but He loves every living soul, whether human or animal, equally. Just as the sun shines alike upon the heads of sages and sinners, so the love of that Divine Being touches the souls of all. Why does He love all beings equally ? Because each individual soul is related to God as a part is related to the whole. As a part cannot exist independently, so our souls cannot exist independent of the Soul of the universe. Therefore we live and move and exist in and through the whole, or Iswara. God loves His parts because He cannot help it. How can it be otherwise ? How is it possible for a whole not to love its own parts ? Love means the expression of oneness. At the bottom of all earthly love exists this idea of oneness ; the lover and the beloved must be one, one in spirit, in thoughts, in ideas, in everything, otherwise there is no real love. Therefore God is all-loving. Thus if we try with the aid of the light of science and reason to understand the true significance of the attributes of God, we are forcibly driven to the conclusions of Vedanta. With the help of Vedanta we can realize the true relation which the universe bears to God, which the individual soul bears to the infinite Being.

If we once understand that God is the source of all existence and power and is the one Reality, that outside of God no existence is possible, then we begin to feel the presence of divinity everywhere. In every action of our lives we realize that the divine power is working through

us, and at every moment of our earthly existence we feel ourselves to be like so many instruments through which the Divine will is manifesting itself and doing whatever He ordains. All the actions of our lives are then turned into acts of worship of the Supreme Deity. Being dead to selfishness, we are then able to say from the bottom of our hearts, "O Lord, Thy will, not mine, be done."

All fear then vanishes, all sins are redeemed, and the individual soul becomes free from the bondage of ignorance and selfishness. This realization leads to a still higher and closer union with the Divine. The soul gradually realizes spiritual oneness with the universal Spirit or Brahman. Thus having attained to God-consciousness, which is the highest ideal of all religions, the individual soul becomes like Christ and declares "I and my Father are one."

HAS GOD ANY FORM ?

"The all-pervading, omnipotent and formless Spirit manifests Himself in various forms under different names to fulfil the desires of His worshippers,"—Vishnu Purana,

Students of the Old Testament are familiar with the fact that the ancient Israelites conceived their God Elohim or Yahveh, the Lord God, as possessing human attributes and a human form. There are many passages which testify that God walked with Adam and Eve and spoke to them ; He ate and drank with the elders of Israel ; and the Lord said to Moses : " I will cover thee with my hand while I pass by, and I will take my hand away and thou shalt see my back parts ; but my face shalt not be seen," (Ex. xxxiii, 22, 23.) Yahveh was the Lord of the House of Israel. He was, moreover, not only the God of Abraham and of Moses, but He became the Supreme Being and the only God, above all gods. Upon this conception of the Supreme Being with a human form and human personality have been built the structures of the two great monotheistic or dualistic religions, Judaism and Christianity.

The same Elohim or Yahveh, the Lord of the house of Israel, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob, and

of Moses, is the almighty Creator, Ruler, and Father in heaven of the Jews and Christians of the present day. He sits on a throne outside the universe, having a right hand and a left hand, and according to the Christian belief, Jesus sits at His right hand. Neither Christ nor Moses nor any of the prophets had to introduce a new God among the Jews. All of them accepted and worshipped the same Elohim or Yahveh, who was at first only the tribal god of the house of Israel. Here we must not forget the original meaning of the word "Elohim," which, although translated into English in the Old Testament as God, at first meant "that which is feared" and was sometimes used vaguely to describe unseen powers or "objects of man's fear" or superhuman beings not properly regarded as divine in their nature. It was also applied to a disembodied soul, which was conceived as the image of the body in which it once dwelt, as, for example, we read in First Samuel (ch. 38, v. 13), the witch of Endor saw "Elohim accending out of the earth," meaning thereby some being or disembodied spirit of an unearthly, superhuman character.

This word "Elohim" was the plural form of "Eloah" and was also used to denote the gods of the heathen. It was a generic name given to supernatural characters of all kinds having quasicorporeal forms, as well as to the gods of different tribes. Chemosh, Dagon, Baal, Yahveh were all known as Elohim and each of

them had a human form. But in spite of its plural meaning the Hebrew prophets used it especially for Yahveh the God of Israel. The Israelites, however, believed Yahveh to be immeasurably superior to the Elohim of other tribes ; while the inscription on the Moabite stone shows that King Mesa held Chemosh to be as unquestionably the superior of Yahveh. It is said : " So now Yahveh the Elohim of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before His people Israel, and shouldst thou possess it ? Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy Elohim giveth thee to possess ? " (Judges xi, 23, 24,) The Israelites of those days considered the difference between one Elohim and other to be one of degree and not of kind. The same word was likewise applied to Teraphim, the images of family gods which were only deceased ancestors. Laban asks his son-in-law most indignantly, " Wherefore hast thou stolen my Elohim ? "

From a careful study of the Old Testament we see that, although the Israelites believed in many kinds of Elohim and used the word indiscriminately, Yahveh was the God of their tribe, while other tribes had Elohim of their own. When the house of Israel conquered any other tribe, their tribal God Yahveh stood at the head of the gods of the conquered tribe, as we know from history. When the Babylonians and Chaldeans were conquered by the Israelites, Yahveh was placed above Bel, Baal, Merodoch, Moloch, and the other Elohim or

gods of the conquered tribes. Thus by the gradual process of evolution Elohim or Yahveh became the king or Lord of all gods. We can now easily understand what the Hebrew Psalmist meant when he said : " Among the gods there is none like unto thee, the king above all gods." But although Yahveh became the supreme Lord of all gods, hence of all tribes and nations, he still did not lose his human form, human attributes and human personality. Even when he became the creator and ruler of the universe, he had the same human form, the same attributes and personality as were ascribed to him by the ancient Israelites. A belief in many gods was at the foundation of the Judaic conception of one Supreme Being, and Yahveh, the tribal god originally worshipped under the form of a bull, gradually evolved into " god of gods " and finally into the one and only God of the universe.

In like manner it can be shown that among the ancient Greeks and other Aryan nations the idea of a personal God with a human form gradually developed from a belief in many tribal gods or nature gods. All monotheistic conceptions can be traced back to polytheistic beliefs. The ancient Greeks, like all other primitive peoples, worshipped many nature gods. They perceived the forces of nature and gave to them human powers and attributes. We know that Zeus, Apollo, Athene were all personified powers of nature. Zeus originally meant sky, hence god of the sky, the god of rain or rainer.

The old prayer of the Athenians was " Rain, rain, O dear Zeus, on the land of the Athenians and on the fields." Here " O dear Zeus" or dear sky at once brings in the personal element, " Dear sky " refers to the god of the sky, the governor of rain. Apollo again was the sun god ; Athene, the dawn-goddess. Each of these mythological deities was, further more, originally the god of some family or clan, and afterward when one family became stronger than others, its family god stood at the head of the other gods ; thus in course of time the ancient God Zeus-pitar or in Latin Jupiter, meaning in English Father in heaven, became the God of all gods and was supposed to be the God of all nations.

So it was in ancient India during the Vedic period, The Vedic poets at first personified the forces of nature and gave them human attributes and intelligence. They were called in Sanskrit " Devas " or " Bright Ones," such as Indra the rainer or thunderer, Agni the god of fire, Vâyu the god of storm or wind, Varuna the god of the sky, and so on. Eventually Varuna, lord of the sky, became Deva Deva, the God of all gods, and thus gradually arose in India the monotheistic conception of the Supreme personal God with human attributes. It can in the same way be shown that the tribal gods among the Semitic tribes were at first nothing but nature gods.

It may be asked here : Why were the forces of nature personified ? Because primitive man could not help it.

Wherever he saw any activity or motion, he compared it to the conscious activity of his own body or to the voluntary movements of his limbs, and explained this natural activity by imagining it to be the conscious act of some superhuman being, possessing will-power and intelligence, and who was called the mover. From this we can easily understand the reason for the ancient belief that all material objects like the sun, moon and stars, were moved by angels. Now we say "it rains" or "it thunders," but the primitive man used to say "he rains," "he thunders." In this manner the unscientific minds of ancient times came to a belief in natural agencies. These agents were like human beings, only more powerful than any mortal agent. Hence was developed the idea of superhuman beings who became tribal gods, who were invoked in time of need. The Lord of the universe and the king above all gods was necessarily infinitely more powerful than these superhuman agents of nature, but still he had a human form infinitely magnified in size, because it is extremely difficult for the human mind to go beyond the idea of a human God.

From ancient times, however, strong protests have been made by great thinkers against this human idea of God with human form and human attributes ; but again and again these objections have been brushed aside by the vast majority of people. Xenophanes, the Greek philosopher, about the sixth century before Christ tried to overthrow this

anthropomorphic conception of God. He said : "The Godhead is all eyes, all ears, all understanding, unmoved, undivided, calmly ruling everything by his thought, like men neither in form nor in understanding." The early Christians who were brought up in the schools of Plato and Aristotle also deprecated the idea of a human God. To them the Supreme Being was no longer simply Elohim or Yahveh, the Lord of the house of Israel ; not merely the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who walked in the garden of Eden in the cool of the day and ate and drank ; He was no longer even the God " who maketh the clouds His chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind," but a Supreme Being who was infinite, indescribable, unutterable, and whose form could not be seen with fleshly eyes, whose voice could not be heard with mortal ear, whose size was incomprehensible. Clement of Alexandria says : " There is no name that can properly be named of Him ; neither the one, nor the good, nor mind, nor absolute being, nor Father, nor creator, nor Lord can be the appropriate name for Him." And Cardinal Newman declares : " God is incommunicable in all His attributes."

Not very long ago the Bishop of London also protested against the human God, saying : " There is a sense in which we cannot ascribe personality to the unknown, absolute Being ; for our sense of personality is of necessity compassed with limitations, and from these limitations we find it impossible to separate our

conception of a person." When, indeed, we speak of human personality, we include not only age, but sex, character, outward appearance, the expression of the face and so on.

Those who believe in a personal God with a human form and human attributes do not consider these limitations. They do not think for a moment: How is it possible for the infinite eternal Being to be confined within the limits of a human form, however magnified it may be? How is it possible for the Absolute Being to come under the limitations of time and space? Physical form is nothing but limitation in space and time and if the eternal and infinite God be above time and space, how can He have a physical form? Yet most of the dualistic religions teach that God has a form, and ask us to believe in it and to worship Him as one with form. How are we going to reconcile this self-contradictory statement that God is the infinite, eternal Being with a finite form? We do not find any solution of the difficulty in any of the Scriptures of the three great Semitic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Mahometanism. Of these Christianity conceives God under a triune form, while Judaism and Mahometanism insist on the absolute unity of the Supreme Being. Where is then the solution of the problem? If God be infinite and all-pervading, how can He have form?

The dualists or monotheists believe in the Supreme Being with a human form, but they say that that form is

not material or physical but spiritual. It cannot be seen by the physical eye, but it can be seen by the spiritual eye of an enlightened soul. According to the dualistic system of religion in India, the infinite, eternal, unknowable Being or substance of the universe, which is called in Sanskrit *Brahman*, is the source of all powers and all forms. Although it is formless like the infinite ocean of reality or of absolute existence, intelligence and bliss, it nevertheless contains in a potential state all the forms of the waves that can arise in that eternal ocean. The water of the ocean has no particular form or shape ; we can say that it is formless in one sense, but at the same time it can take any form when frozen into ice. A block of ice for instance, can appear in the form of a triangle, a sphere, a circle, an animal or a human being. The same water without losing its nature can appear in a solidified form ; and as in this case we are justified in saying that water, although formless, contains in a potential state all imaginable forms within itself, so the water of the ocean of that absolute Reality possesses in a potential state all the physical, material, mental and spiritual forms that ever existed, or ever will exist in future.

The infinite, eternal Brahman does, indeed, appear and manifest itself with a spiritual form, in order to satisfy the desire of the devotee or worshipper. Wherever there is intense longing to see God, wherever there is unflinching devotion and unselfish love with the whole heart and soul, there is the manifestation of the formless One

to fulfil the desire of the devotee. It is then that the invisible Brahman, or the Supreme Being, or the Reality manifests itself and becomes visible to the spiritual eye of the worshipper. Intense longing, unswerving devotion and whole-hearted love of the soul draw out from the infinite source any particular form which the devotee wishes to see and worship ; they have the power, as it were, to condense and solidify the water of the ocean of Reality into the various forms. The spiritual form of the Divinity rises in the ocean of formless Brahman or of the absolute Godhead, floats there for some time, and after satisfying the desires of the true Bhakta or worshipper, merges into that ocean again.

These forms vary in accordance with the ideal of the worshipper. If a worshipper has a longing to see God in the form to which he is devoted, of Jehovah or of Christ for instance, he must draw that out of the infinite ocean. The Divinity will appear in that form to satisfy the desire of that devotee. If he be devoted to the form of Buddha, or Krishna, or Râmakrishna, or any other human or imaginary form, he will see such an one with his spiritual eye through intense longing and love. The personal God with a spiritual form is the objectification, projection, manifestation of the impersonal ocean of Divinity. The highest of all such manifestations is the Iswara of Vedanta. He is worshipped under various names as Vishnu, Jehovah, Shiva, Father in heaven, or Allah. As all-pervading heat is imperceptible but be-

comes perceptible through friction, so wherever there is the intense friction of devotion, and love in the soul of the worshipper, there is the manifestation of that infinite Being either in human or superhuman form. There have been many such instances where the absolute omnipresent Being manifested itself in various forms among all nations and in all countries.

In ancient times there lived a boy saint who was the son of a ruling monarch. His name was Prahlâda. His father was absolutely materialistic and atheistic in his belief, and could not bear the idea of a ruler greater and more powerful than himself. He believed in no other ruler of the world and through vanity and egotism thought that he was the lord of all. His son Prahlâda, however, was a born saint. From his childhood his heart and soul were filled with extreme faith, devotion and love for the almighty Ruler and Lord of the universe. He cared nothing for the world and found no pleasure in the luxuries and comforts of a princely life. They did not attract his mind. He always preferred to stay alone and had a tendency to renounce everything. So deeply absorbed was his mind in his Divine Ideal that he could not listen to other things, and it was impossible for him to obey the commands of his godless father. The king grew angry at his behavior, and one day, calling the prince to him, he asked him the reason of his disobedience. He inquired under whose instigation he was behaving in that way and acting rebelliously against

him who was the lord of all. The boy saint replied : " The ruler of the universe, the lord of all nations, who is greater and more powerful than your majesty, has captured my heart and soul and has inspired me to behave in this way." At this reply the king, furious with rage and anger, was ready to punish his son by killing him instantly. Drawing his sword, he cried : " How dost thou dare to say that thou hast a lord more powerful or stronger than I ? Where is thy lord ? Show him to me !" The boy answered: " He is everywhere." The king demanded, " Is he in that pillar ?" Prahlâda, praying to his Divine Ideal from the bottom of his heart and soul and with firm faith, rejoined: " Yes, He is there in that pillar." The king answered : " Now ask thy lord to save thee from being beheaded." Thus saying, he struck the pillar with a giant's might and knocked it down. In the midst of the thundering noise of the crash appeared the divine figure, radiant with celestial glory, to protect the devotee of the Almighty Lord. The eyes of the wicked monarch were dazzled by the extraordinary brightness and celestial lustre of the divine form, but he could not bear the sight of another lord beside himself. He attacked the Divine manifestation and in his attempt to conquer the Supreme Ruler he fell breathless on the spot. Such was the power of true faith. Can any one question the powers of true faith when Jesus said : " for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this

mountain 'remove hence from yonder place,' it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you." (Matt. xvii, 20.) That faith brought out the manifestation of the omnipresent Lord from the pillar. At the sight of this wonderful Divine power and glory of the Almighty the soul of the boy saint was filled with unbounded joy and ecstatic happiness. He approached the mighty figure with awe, reverence and devotion, and prostrating himself at His feet, he poured forth all prayers before Him to his heart's content saying: "O Lord, the Almighty Ruler of the universe, Thou art indeed all-pervading and almighty. Thy power is inscrutable. To save Thy child from imminent death, to fulfil the desire of Thy true devotee and to punish this vain and egotistical earthly monarch, Thou hast shown Thy power and glory to all by making this Thy superhuman manifestation. What words are adequate to describe Thy majesty and Thy loving-kindness? All words that we can utter are Thine! I am Thy child and Thy servant; keep me in Thy service forever and ever, O Lord and Father of all animate and inanimate beings of the universe."

"O Lord, Thou art the goal of all religions, and the sustainer, the master, the witness, the habitation, the refuge and the friend of all living creatures; Thou art the origin, dissolution, support, end and the inexhaustible seed of the whole manifested universe. Thou art one, yet Thou takest many forms through Thy unspeakable

power of Mâyâ, I bow down and salute Thee.
Whosoever knows Thee as formless and with form knows
the eternal Truth."

FATHERHOOD AND MOTHERHOOD OF GOD.

"*I am the Father and Mother of the universe.*"—Bhagavad Gita, ix, 17.

"*Why does the Gold-lover find such pleasure in addressing the Deity as Mother? Because the child is more free with its Mother, and consequently she is dearer to the child than any one else.*"—Life and Sayings of Rāmakrishna, by F. Max Muller, p. 118.

The religious history of the world shows that the conception of God as the Father of the universe first arose among the Aryan nations, and not among any of the Semitic tribes. It was in ancient India that the Aryans first worshipped the Supreme Being by addressing Him as the Father in Heaven. The origin of the English word "father" can be traced back through Latin "Pater" and Greek "Pitar" to Sanskrit "Pitar" meaning father. The Christians, however, believe that before the advent of Jesus the Christ, the fatherhood of the Almighty Being was unknown to the world.

Not very long ago the famous Rt. Rev. Bishop Potter of New York said in one of his lectures : "Go to India, to Burma, to China, to Greece ; or to Egypt or Rome and see if anywhere among them all you will

find a religion with any other idea of man than that he is the mere creature of his governor, his Pharaoh, his Sultan, his Rajah, his proconsul, or by whatever name you choose to call it." He also said: "It was Christ who brought an entirely new conception of the relation of God to men." Such statements, however, are neither founded upon truth nor supported by any historical evidence. On the contrary, it is a well-known fact that in India, from prehistoric times, the Hindu religion has given to man a position much higher than the Christian conception of his relation to his Maker. The ancient Vedic sages were the first to declare before the world that the human soul is not only the child of God but that it is essentially divine and in its true nature is one with the Supreme Being.

According to the Hebrew religion the relation of God to man was like that of an absolute monarch to his subject, or like that of a master to his slave; while the religious history of the ancient Aryan nations testifies that they had risen to a much higher conception of God than as a despotic Ruler long before the Christian era. The Christian missionaries and preachers have been trumpeting before the world for several centuries that no religion outside of Christianity has ever inculcated the idea of the Fatherhood of God and that it was Christ alone who brought it to men from his celestial abode. Moreover, they are especially eager to impress upon the minds of their

co-religionists that the Hindus in particular had no conception of a Heavenly Father, that they never knew the fatherly relation of God to man. But those who have studied carefully the history of the growth of Christianity are familiar with the fact that the idea of the Fatherhood of God did not originate with Jesus the Christ as modern Christians believe, but existed in the religious atmosphere of northern Palestine from the second century B. C. as a result of the Hellenic influence upon Judaism of the worship of Jupiter. Jesus took up this grand Aryan idea of the Fatherhood of God and emphasized it in his teachings more strongly than any of his predecessors had done in Palestine.* It was Yahveh that Christ worshipped as his Heavenly Father, it was Yahveh to whom he prayed as the Father of the universe ; consequently, those who follow Christ and his teachings, worship their God through the same relation as was established by their Master. The worship of God is impossible without having some kind of relation between the worshipper and the object of worship.

The relation between father and son is much higher than that between the creator and his creatures as it had existed in Judaism. The transition from the Judaic relation between God and man to that of father and son was therefore a great step toward the realization of the spiritual unity of the individual soul and the universal Spirit. It was no longer an external

* See p. 173 : *Son of God*.

relation to power and strength, but had become a kind of kinship, of internal blood relation such as exists between an earthly father and his son. There is a tie of love that binds a son to his father, and such a tie brings the individual soul nearer to the Creator of the universe. As the earthly father of an individual is ordinarily considered to be his creator because of his begetting him and bringing him into existence out of an invisible germ, so when the undeveloped mind began to think of the creation of the universe, it imagined that the creator was one who brought the world into existence and produced it out of nothing. Gradually the conception of the creator evolved into that of the father of the universe.

All our conceptions of God begin with anthropomorphism, that is, with giving to God human attributes in a greatly magnified degree, and end in de-anthropomorphism, or making Him free from human attributes. At the first stage the human mind conceives of the creator as a great Being who dwells outside of the world which he creates, just as the father is separate from the son whom he begets. The Hebrew conception of Yahveh was purely anthropomorphic. Yahveh possessed all human attributes and, dwelling in a heaven outside of the universe, created the world out of nothing, fashioned it, and afterward became its governor. The same Yahveh, when addressed by Jesus the Christ as the Father in heaven, did not lose his Yahvehic nature ; but was simply endowed with the fatherly aspect of Jupiter or the

Greek Zeus-pitar. The sweet, loving and fatherly attributes of Jupiter were superadded to the stern, extra-cosmic Yahveh, the despotic ruler of the world.

The word Jupiter, or Zeus-pitar, has a long history behind it, with which ordinary readers are not familiar, but which is known to a few Vedic scholars. It meant "father in heaven" and is a transmuted form of the Sanskrit Dyus-Pitar or Dyaus-Pitar, which very often occurs in the Rig Veda, the oldest of the revealed Scriptures of the world. The term "Dyaus" or "Dyus" originally signified "shining space" or "heavens," but afterwards it was used for the self-effulgent Spirit dwelling in the heavens; and "Pitar" was the father and the protector. In the second book of the Rig Veda (ch. iii, ver. 20) we read, "Dyaus mé pitâ janitâ nâbhi ratra." Here the word "Dyaus" is used, not in the sense of "shining heavens" as some of the Oriental scholars have imagined, but it refers to the Spiritual Source of all light as well as of heavens. "Pitâ," literally "father," here means "protector." The meaning of this verse therefore is "That shining or self-effulgent Spirit who dwells in the heavens, is my father and protector, my progenitor or producer, and in him lies the source of all things." This was the earliest conception of the fatherly aspect of the Supreme Being which we find in studying the Vedas. Again, in the tenth book of the Rig Veda, Prajâpati, the Lord of all creatures, is addressed as "Pitar," the Father and the Protector (ch. v, ver. 6, 7).

The one Supreme personal God was called in the Vedas "Prajâpati," the Lord and Father of all creatures. He is most beautifully described in the one hundred and twenty-first hymn of the tenth book of the Rig Veda. The conception of a personal God which we find in this hymn has not been surpassed by the idea of a personal God among any other nation during the last five thousand years. When an ancient Vedic Seer was asked "To whom shall we offer our prayers and sacrifices?" he replied:

1. "In the beginning there arose the Prajâpati, the first-born Lord of all that exists. He holds by His power the heavens and the earth. To Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

2. "Prajâpati, the Lord of all creatures, who gives life and strength to all that exists, from whose body emanate the individual souls like sparks from fire; who is the purifier of all souls; whose commands all creatures revere and obey; whose shadow is immortality and mortality; to Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

3. "Who by His power and glory became the one King (without a second) of all men, of beasts, nay, of all animate and inanimate objects; to Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

4. "Whose greatness is manifested in the snow-capped ranges of mountains and in the waters of the rivers and the oceans; whose arms are spread on all sides; to Him should we offer our prayers and sacrifices.

5. "Who made the sky strong and the earth firm, who established heavens in their places, nay, the highest heaven ; who measured the light in the air ; to Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

6. "To whom heaven and earth, standing firm by His help, look up, trembling in their minds, and by whose support the rising sun shines forth ; to Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

7. "When the great waters went everywhere, holding the germ and generating fire, thence He arose who is the sole life of the bright spirits (Devas). To Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

8. "Who is the one Lord of all living beings and God above all gods ; who by His might looked over the causal waters at the time of dissolution ; to Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

9. "May He not injure us, He who is the Creator of the earth, heavens, and bright and mighty waters, who is the foundation of truth, righteousness and justice. To Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

10. "O Prajâpati, no other but Thou has held together all these phenomena ; whatever we desire in sacrificing to Thee, may that be ours ; may we be the lords of all wealth."

The same Prajâpati, the true, just and righteous Lord of the universe and God of all gods, was addressed by the Vedic Sage as "Dyaus-Pitar" or the Father in heaven and the Protector of all. He is des-

cribed in another hymn of the Rig Veda as *Aditi*, the unflinching and immutable support of the phenomenal universe. The word "Aditi" signified the motherly aspect of the Divine Being. "Aditi is in the heavens and in the illumined space that pervades between heaven and earth, the Mother of all Devas or gods as well as the Creator of all animate and inanimate objects. She is also the Father and Protector of all; She is the Son and the Creator ; by Her grace She saves from sin the souls of those who worship Her. She gives unto Her children everything that is worth giving. She dwells in the forms of all Devas or bright spirits ; She is all that is born and all that will be born. She is all in all." (Rig Veda, Book 2, ch. vi, verse 17.)

Thus we see that in ancient India God was conceived as both the Father and the Mother of the universe centuries before Jesus was born. In Greece, however, the idea of the Fatherhood of Zeus-pitar prevailed, but his motherly aspect was denied, because Zeus-pitar or Jupiter was only an extra-cosmic personal God. As long as the conception of God is extra-cosmic, or as dwelling outside of nature, so long He appears to His worshippers as father alone and as masculine. The God of Jesus the Christ was the same extra-cosmic creator who was called Yahveh or Jehovah in Judaism and who was always described as masculine.

According to the Hebrews the masculine element of nature possessed all activity, strength and power ; the

male principle was recognized as the generator, and the female principle of nature was thought to be lower, insignificant, powerless and passive. The female principle of nature was the producer and bearer of what the male principle created ; consequently everything that represented the female principle was considered as unimportant. This explains why womanhood was estimated so low by the writers of the Old and New Testaments, especially by the great apostle to the Gentiles. Even the very appearance and existence of woman on earth depended upon a man's rib, according to Genesis. Although the Creator was represented by the Hebrews as masculine and all-powerful, when they explained the genesis of the world they could not deny the presence of the feminine element which helped the Creator in bringing life into existence. In the Mosaic account of Genesis we read "And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. i, 2), which literally means that the Creator impregnated the waters or the female element of nature. And, as God, that is, the male element, was extra-cosmic, outside of nature, and possessed all activity and power, He became the object of worship ; and the female element or nature was entirely ignored. Every Christian admits the existence of nature, the female principle ; but she has never been worshipped or adored. The idea of Father grew stronger and stronger and the mother nature was left aside as passive and powerless, and was ultimately ignored. As long as the conception

of God remains as extra-cosmic, separate from nature which is passive, so long will He appear as Father alone. The more we comprehend God as immanent and resident in nature, the more clearly we understand that God is our Mother as well as our Father. When we see that nature or the feminine principle is inseparable from the Supreme Being or the masculine element, when we realize that nature is not passive and powerless but the Divine Energy, then we understand that God is one stupendous Whole, in whom exist both the masculine and feminine principles. Then we no longer separate nature from God, but we recognize nature as a part of the manifested Divine Energy.

So long as God is supposed to dwell outside of nature and as father alone, He remains as the efficient cause of the universe, while nature appears to be the material cause. But when we realize that nature or the material cause is nothing but a part of the manifested Divine Energy, we then understand that God does not, like a carpenter or a potter, create or fashion the phenomena out of the materials which exist outside of Himself, but that He projects by the process of evolution everything out of His own body wherein dwell all matter and forces of the world.

In no other Scriptures than the Vedas, in no other religion than that of Vedanta, is the personal God described as the Father and the Mother, the efficient and the material cause of the universe. Now-a-days

liberal-minded Christians are trying to introduce the idea that God is both Father and Mother of the universe ; but they do not realize that by so doing they are entirely upsetting the Christian conception of God, who dwells outside of nature and of the universe. The God of Christianity can never become both Father and Mother at the same time. If we address Him as the Mother of the universe, we have outgrown that conception of God which is taught in the Bible and in Christian theology. In the whole Scriptures of the Christians there is not one passage where Jehovah is addressed as the Mother. In Isaiah (ch. lxvi, 13) the Lord says : " As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you." From this passage, however, no fair-minded person can deduce that Jehovah was the mother of the universe.

The Vedantic idea that God is the Mother as well as the Father of all harmonizes with the modern scientific conception of God. Modern science traces the whole phenomenal universe back to the state of eternal energy. The doctrine of evolution, correlation of forces, persistence of energy, all these clearly prove that the phenomena of the whole universe and the various forces of the external and internal world are but the expressions of one eternal energy. The theory of evolution explains only the mode in which that eternal energy produces this phenomenal universe. Science has disproved the old theory of creation out of nothing through the fiat of an extracosmic God, and has shown that something can

never come out of nothing. Science teaches that the universe existed in a potential state in that energy, and gradually through the process of evolution the whole potentiality has become kinetic or actual. That eternal energy is not an unintelligent energy, but is intelligent. Wherever we cast our eyes, either in the external or internal world, we find the expression, not of a fortuitous or accidental combination of matter and mechanical forces, but of regular laws guided by definite purpose. This universe is not a chaos but a cosmos, one harmonious whole. It is not an aimless chain of changes which we call evolution, but there is an orderly hidden purpose at every step of evolution. Therefore, that energy is intelligent. We may call this self-existing, intelligent, eternal cosmic energy the Mother of the universe. She is the source of infinite forces and infinite phenomena. This eternal energy is called in Sanskrit *Prakṛiti* (Latin *procreatrix*), the creative power of the universe.

“Thou art the ‘Parâ Prakṛiti’ or the divine energy of the Supreme Being. Of Thee is born everything of the universe, therefore Thou art the Mother of the universe.” As all the forces of nature are but the manifestations of this Divine Energy, She is called all-powerful. Wherever there is the expression of any force or power in the universe, there is the manifestation of the eternal Prakṛiti or the Divine Mother. It is more appropriate to call that Energy mother than father, because like a mother, that

Energy holds within her the germ of the phenomenal universe before evolution, develops and sustains it, projects it on space and preserves it when it is born. She is the Mother of the Trinity, Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. She is the source of all activity. She is the *Sakti*, force in action. A creator, when deprived of his creative power, is no longer the creator. As the creative power is one of the expressions of that eternal Energy, the Creator or Brahmâ is looked upon by the Hindus as the child of the universal Divine Mother, so, too, is the Preserver Vishnu and the Destroyer Siva. The Hindus have understood this Eternal Energy as the Mother of the universe and have worshipped Her from the prehistoric times of the Vedic period. Here we should remember that this Divine Energy is not the same as the powerless and passive nature which was rejected and ignored by the Jews and the Christians. We must not mistake this worship of the Divine Mother for Nature worship. In the Rig Veda we read : "The Mother Divine says, 'I am the Queen of the universe, the giver of all wealth and fruits of works. I am intelligent and omniscient. Although I am one, by My powers I appear as manifold. I cause war for protecting men, I kill the enemy and bring peace on earth. I stretch out heaven and earth. I have produced the Father. As the wind blows by itself, so I produce all phenomena by My own will. I am independent and responsible to none. I am beyond the sky, beyond this earth. My glory is the phenomenal

universe ; such am I by My power.' ”*

Thus the Divine Mother is described as all in all. We live and move and have our existence in that Divine Mother. Who can live for a moment if that Eternal Energy cease to manifest ? All our mental and physical activity depends on Her. She is doing whatever She chooses to do. She is independent. She obeys none. She is the producer of every event that occurs in the universe. She makes one appear good, spiritual and divine, while it is She who makes another appear as wicked and sinful; since it is through Her power one performs virtuous deeds or commits sinful acts. But She is beyond good and evil, beyond virtue and vice. Her forces are neither good nor evil, although they appear so to us when we look at them from different standpoints and compare them with one another.

When that all-pervading divine energy manifests, it expresses itself in two sets of opposite forces. The one set has the tendency towards God and is called ' Vidyâ ' in Sanskrit. The other tends towards worldliness and is called ' Avidyâ '. The one leads to freedom and happiness, and the other to bondage and suffering. The one is knowledge, the other ignorance. The one is light, the other is darkness. Each individual soul is a center where these opposite forces are constantly working and fighting with one another. When ' Vidyâ ' or the powers which lead Godward predominate, we advance towards God

* Rig Veda, x, hymn, 125.

and become religious, spiritual and unselfish ; but when its opposite, the 'Avidyâ' power prevails we become worldly, selfish and wicked. When the former is predominant the latter is overcome, and *vice versa*. These powers exist in each individual, though they vary in the degree of intensity in each. The man or woman, in whom the former, that is, the Godward-leading-powers prevail, is called devotional, prayerful, righteous, pure in heart, unselfish. These qualities are but expressions of the 'Vidyâ' powers within us. Such higher powers are latent in all, even in those who do not show virtuous qualities. All persons can rouse those latent spiritual forces by practising devotion, prayer, righteousness, purity, unselfishness. The easiest way to attain them is by the worship of the 'Vidyâ Sakti', or that aspect of the Divine Mother or Divine Energy which represents all the powers that lead to spiritual perfection.

By worship or devotion is meant constant remembrance of that aspect. If we constantly think of the source of all spirituality and of all the higher powers which make one spiritual, surely those powers will be aroused in us, and we shall become spiritual, righteous and unselfish. Therefore the Hindus worship this 'Vidyâ Sakti'. When they worship that aspect, they do not, however, deny, or ignore its opposite nature which leads to worldliness, but they make it subordinate to the higher 'Vidyâ' aspect. Sometimes they think of these opposite forces separately, personify them and make them the female attendants of

the Divine Mother. The Divine Mother has many attendants. All the evil forces of nature are Her attendants. She stands in the center of the universe radiant in Her own glory, like the sun when surrounded on all sides by thick, dark clouds.

Wherever there is any expression of extraordinary righteousness and spirituality, it is a special manifestation of the Divine Mother, there is Her incarnation. The Divine Mother incarnates sometimes in the form of a man, and sometimes in the form of a woman, to establish order and righteousness. All men and women are Her children. But there is something more in woman. As woman represents motherhood on earth, so all women, whether married or unmarried, are representatives of that Almighty Divine Mother of the universe. It is for this reason that women are so highly revered and honored by the Hindus. There is no country in the world except India where God the Supreme Being has been worshipped from time immemorial as the Divine Mother of the universe. India is the only country where the earthly mother is looked upon as the living Deity, and where a man learns in his childhood "One mother is greater than a thousand fathers."

You have heard many stories regarding the condition of women in India. Most of these, however, are grossly exaggerated, some are utterly false and some are partially true. The familiar American story of Hindu mothers throwing their babes into the Ganges

to become food for crocodiles, is unknown among the Hindus. In the first place, crocodiles cannot live in a strong current like that of the Ganges. I have travelled the length of this mighty river from its mouth to its source, some fifteen hundred miles, but never found a single instance of such an inhuman act. Hindu mothers, like their Christian sisters, may sometimes destroy their children, but such action is as strongly condemned in India as in America. These statements were heard by me for the first time after coming to America, though tales and pictures to this effect have been quite common in this country in books for the young.* There is no other country "Where every living mother"—as Sir Monier Monier Williams says—"is venerated as a kind of deity by her children, where every village or city has its special guardian mother, called (in Sanskrit) *Mata*."*

It is extremely difficult for a Western mind to grasp exactly what the Hindus mean when they say that every woman is a representative of the Divine Mother. A very simple illustration will give you an idea of the respect the Hindus have for women. In Sanskrit when two names are used together, the rule of grammar is that the more honorable should stand first. In Sanskrit we say women and men, not men and women, instead of father and mother, we say mother and father; instead of husband and wife, wife and husband, because a woman is always more honorable than a man. In India wives do

*"Hinduism and Brahmanism." p. 222.

not adopt their husband's names, they do not merge their individuality into that of their husbands as women do in the West, but they keep their own name separate. If a wife's name be Râdhâ, and her husband's name be Krishna, and if we say them together, we would say Râdhâ-Krishna and never Krishna-Râdhâ. The wife's name must be said first. So we say Sitâ-Râma ; Sitâ is the wife and Râma is the husband. Again, when God incarnates in a man form, as in Krishna or Râma, the wife of such an incarnation will be worshipped as the incarnation of the Mother. The wife will be worshipped first and then the husband. A Western mind does not easily appreciate the wonderful reverence for womanhood which the Hindus have.

The Divine Mother is the personal God, the same as Iswara in Sanskrit ; and Brahman or the Absolute Substance or the Universal Spirit is the impersonal Being. Brahman is formless, nameless and without any attributes. It is the ocean of absolute intelligence, existence and bliss. It has no activity. It is the Godhead of Fichte, the Substantia of Spinoza. It transcends all phenomena. Before phenomenal manifestation Divine Energy rested on the bosom of that ocean of Absolute Being in a potential state. It is the dormant state of activity somewhat like our deep sleep state when all activity is latent. As in deep sleep all the mental and physical powers exist in us in an unmanifested condition and nothing is lost, so, before the beginning of the cosmic evolution, all

the phenomenal forces of the universe remained dormant in that Energy. There were no phenomena, no manifestation of any powers whatever. Again, as in our waking state all the latent powers manifest and we are able to walk, move, talk and are tremendously active, so, when a portion of that Impersonal Being wakes up, as it were, and manifests the latent cosmic powers of the sleeping Energy, the evolution of the cosmic Energy begins and the Impersonal Being appears as the Creator of the universe and its Preserver.

The Impersonal Being is then called personal, on account of that manifested energy. According to the Hindus the impersonal Brahman is neither masculine nor feminine. But the personal God is masculine and feminine both in one. Energy and Being are inseparable in the personal God. As pure Being without energy cannot produce any phenomena and as Energy possesses all activity and is the mother of all forces and phenomena, the personal God is most appropriately called the Mother of the universe. As fire and its burning power or heat are inseparable, so Being and Energy are inseparable and one. Those who worship the masculine aspect of God, in reality worship the male child born of that Divine Mother. Because the activity, strength and power which make one masculine, owe their origin to that Divine Energy. But those who worship the Divine Mother worship the Whole—all gods, all angels and all spirits that exist in the universe.

The wonderful effect of this conception of the Motherhood of God is to be found in the daily life of almost every Hindu woman and man. A Hindu woman thinks that she is a part of the Divine Mother, nay one with Her. She looks upon all men and women of the world as her own children. She thinks of herself as the blessed Mother of the world. How can such a woman be unkind to anybody? Her pure motherly love flows towards all men and women equally. There is no room for any impure thought or feeling or passion in such a heart. That perfect motherly feeling makes her ultimately live like the Divine Mother on earth. Her ideal God in human form is her own child. She worships the incarnation of God as her most beloved child. Just as Mary was the Mother of Jesus, so the Hindu women in India often look upon themselves as the mother of Krishna, the Hindu Christ, or of Râma, another incarnation. Christian mothers, perhaps, will be able to appreciate this to a certain extent. If a Christian mother thinks that she is Christ's mother and loves Him as she loves her own child, the effect will be wonderful. She will then understand what Divine Motherhood is. The Hindus think this the easiest way for women to attain to that love which makes them unselfish and divine. A mother can sacrifice everything for her child; she naturally loves the child without seeking any return, though there are mothers who do not possess pure, unselfish motherly love. A true mother, however, loves her

child above everything. If such a child be an incarnation of God Himself, how easy it will be for the mother to attain to the highest goal of religion. I know a lady in India who became a widow when she was young. She did not marry again. She was not like the ordinary woman of the world who thinks that a husband is essential to her happiness and that marriage is the highest ideal of life. She lived the pure life of a nun and worshipped Krishna as her own child. She became so advanced in spirituality that now hundreds of educated men and women of high rank in Calcutta come to see her, to receive spiritual instruction from her. They kiss the dust of her feet as devout Roman Catholics kiss the feet of the statue of Mary, they revere her and call her the Mother of God, Mother of Krishna, the Shepherd. She is still living near Calcutta. She feels in herself the presence of the blessed Mother of the universe.

Another wonderful result of this conception of God as the Mother of the universe, is that when a man worships God as his mother, he always thinks of himself as a child in its Mother's arms. As a child does not fear anything when it is near its mother, so the worshipper of the Divine Mother is never afraid of anything. He sees the Blessed Mother everywhere. In every woman he sees the manifestation of his Eternal Mother. Consequently, every woman on earth is his mother. He conquers all lust and sense desires. He sees woman in a different light. He worships every

woman mentally.

I have seen a man who lived on this earth like a living child of the Divine Mother, always protected and taken care of by Her. He worshipped God as the Mother of the universe. Through that worship he became pure, righteous and spiritual. He used to say "O, my Mother, Thou art all in all. Thou art my Guide, my Leader and Strength." His Divine Mother showed him the true nature of man and woman. He bowed down before all women, young, mature and old, and said to them—"You are the living representatives of my Divine Mother on earth." How can a child have any other relation to one who is the same as its real mother? By this kind of devotion he conquered all lust and worldliness. His child-like, whole-souled and rapturous self-consecration to the Divine Mother is a landmark in the religious history of India. His whole life, which was the personification of purity, self-control, self-resignation and filial love to the Divine Mother, stands as a mighty testimony to the reality and effectiveness of the worship of God as the Mother of the universe. When he sang the praises of the Divine Mother, he gave life to every word he uttered, and no soul could hear him without being moved to tears by deep devotional feelings, without realizing that this wonderful child was in direct communion with his Divine Mother. His Divine Mother showed him that each woman was Her incarnation, so he worshipped and honored all women

as a son might worship his own mother. Some Western people may laugh at such reverence, but a Hindu is extremely proud of it. He knows how to honour a woman. Professor Max Müller was much impressed with the wonderful life of this great sage, and recently published his life and sayings.* He was once asked ; " If we are the children of your Divine Mother, why does She not take care of us ? Why does She not come to us and take us up in Her arms ?" The sage replied: "A mother has several children. To one she has given a doll, to another some candy, to the third a music box, according as each one likes. Thus when they begin to play and are absorbed, they forget their mother; she in the meanwhile looks after her household work. But the moment any one of them gets tired of the play, and, throwing aside the plaything, cries for the mother, 'Mamma, mamma dear!' she runs quickly to him, takes him up in her arms, kisses him often and often and caresses him. So, oh man ! being absorbed with the playthings of the world you have forgotten your Divine Mother ; when you get tired of your play, and, throwing aside the toys, you cry for Her sincerely and with the simplicity of a child, She will come at once and take you up in Her arms. Now you want to play and She has given you all that you need at present." Each one of us will see the Divine Mother sooner or

* " Life and Sayings of Râmakrishna," by F. Max Müller, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

later. The mother is always taking care of us and protecting us whether we feel it or not, whether we realize it or not.

The Vedanta philosophy recognizes both the fatherhood and motherhood of the personal God and teaches us that through the worship of either of these aspects the highest ideal of religion can be reached. The Prajâpati or the Lord of all creatures of the Vedas is called "Iswara" in Vedanta. Some worship Him as the Father, while others call Him Divine Mother. But He is sexless and therefore both Father and Mother of all. Those who address Him as the Father say :

"O Lord, Thou art the father of the universe, of all animate and inanimate objects. Thou art worshipped by all. Thou art greater than the greatest ; O Thou of incomparable power, none in the heavens and earth is equal to Thee, how can any one be greater? O Lord, as a father forgiveth his son, a friend his dear friend, a lover his beloved, even so do Thou forgive me."

Those who worship His motherly aspect pray to Her, saying :

"O Mother Divine, Thou art the eternal energy, the infinite source of the universe. Thy powers manifest in the infinite variety of names and forms. Being deluded by the power of ignorance we forget Thee and take pleasure in the playthings of the world. But when we come to Thee, take thy refuge and worship Thee, Thou makest us free from ignorance and worldliness, and givest

us eternal happiness by keeping us, Thine own children,
on Thy bosom."

THE RELATION OF SOUL TO GOD.

"The soul enchained is 'man,' and free from chain is 'God.'"—
Life and Sayings of Rāmakrishna, by F. Max Müller, p. 145.

A clear understanding of man's relation to God is a matter of momentous importance to students of philosophy and religion and to all seekers of Truth. From very ancient times all the best thinkers, prophets and the great religious leaders of the world, whether of the East or of the West, have endeavored to explain our relation to God and to the universe. Out of those explanations have arisen various schools of philosophy and different systems of religious beliefs among the different nations of the world.

Every philosophy and every religion, ancient or modern, has arrived at certain conclusions in its attempt to describe the relation which each individual bears to God. All such conclusions, of course, presuppose the existence of God, and depend upon the nature of our conception of God as well as of the human soul. Those who deny the existence of God and hold that we are but mere accidental appearances in the mechanical process of the blind forces of nature which are acting aimlessly upon

dead matter, think that it is loss of time and waste of energy to discuss such useless and absurd topics. They would rather devote their energy to obtaining the best things of the Godless world for the comforts of the soulless body. They do not believe in the existence of any such thing as soul, mind or spirit apart from the functions of the body. When the body dies everything comes to an end. As with the body, so it is with the material universe.

Such thinkers are not the products of the Twentieth Century alone, but they are as old as the appearance of man upon earth. In ancient India this class of thinkers existed side by side with the believers in the individual soul of man and in God, as numerous as we find them to-day among the most cultivated minds of the West. Those ancient materialists, like the modern agnostics and atheists, making sense perception the standard of their knowledge of things, denied the existence of that which they could not perceive by their senses. But the other class of thinkers, who went below the surface of sense perceptions into the realm of the invisible, weighed these materialistic arguments, pointed out their fallacies, and ultimately established through logical and scientific reasoning, the existence of the individual soul of man as well as of the soul of the universe, or God, and described their mutual relation.

These thinkers can be divided into three classes : First, the dualists; secondly, the qualified non-dualists,

and thirdly, the non-dualists, or monists. The Western dualists believe in an extra-cosmic personal God, who creates the universe out of nothing, fashions it, gives names to the phenomena, and afterwards governs it. According to them, God, the creator and governor of the universe, is eternally separate from the world and from all living creatures, just as a potter is separate from the pot which he makes or as a carpenter who stands always outside of the table or chair which he makes. The dualists believe in a God who has human attributes infinitely magnified. He is all-wise, merciful, just and all-powerful. Some of the dualists go so far as to give human form to God, as we find in the conception of Jehovah among the Hebrews and the orthodox Christians. In the Old Testament, Jehovah is described as walking with Adam in the Garden of Eden. It is said : "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." (Genesis iii, 8.) Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel saw Him. The nobles not only saw but they did eat and drink with Him. (Exodus xxiv, 9, 11.) Moses saw Jehovah's back. Jehovah ate with Abraham under the oaks at Mamre. (Genesis xviii, 1, 8.) God was pleased with the sweet savor of Noah's sacrifice. He possessed human appetites. He walked with Noah.

The same Jehovah with a human form and human qualities and with a human personality is the ideal God of the orthodox Christian monotheists of to-day. They believe in Jehovah as sitting on a throne somewhere in the heavens, with eyes red with anger and revenge, and holding a rod, ever ready to punish the wicked with eternal fire. From many of the orthodox pulpits the same God is preached to day, as He was in the days of the past. The relation of man to such a personal, or rather human God, with human attributes, is like that of a creature to his creator, of a subject to his king, or of a slave to his master. As the duty of a subject is to obey implicitly the commands of his king, or ruler, or governor, so every man's duty is to obey the commands of the Governor of the universe, otherwise he will be punished. Similar relation of man to the extra-cosmic personal Ruler of the universe is to be found in most of the dualistic or monotheistic religions of the world. All the religions of Europe and Asia which are dualistic or monotheistic teach that our relation to God is that of a creature to his creator, or of the governed to the governor.

Although man is said to be created in God's image in Genesis, yet it is generally understood that he cannot have any relation higher than that of a creature to his creator. It simply means that the first man, being the image of God, possessed at first some of the divine qualities before he was tempted by Satan. Although the Chris-

tians believe that Jesus the Christ was the son of God, and that God is the father of the universe, yet according to them, an ordinary mortal cannot be called the son of God in the same sense as Jesus of Nazareth was, because he was an exception to the general rule. Whether Jesus ever meant that he was the only begotten son of God exclusive of any other mortal, is a problem yet to be solved. If every individual be a true image or the son of God, then the question arises, why should He punish His own son so mercilessly with eternal fire as is described in the parable of the marriage of the king's son: "Then said the king to the servants, bind him hand and foot and take him away and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; for many are called but few are chosen." (Matt. xxii, 13, 14.) Again, in the saying: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matt. xxiii, 33.) Thus, according to popular Christianity, as it is understood and preached in the orthodox churches, man's relation to God is not like that of His image, nor like that of a son to his loving Father, but like that of a subject to his despotic monarch, Christ being the only begotten son of God. The Christians believe that God creates the soul out of nothing and implants it in the human form at the time of its birth. As long as there is preached the idea of the creation of the universe and of man out of nothing by an extra-cosmic personal God with human attributes,

so long will our relation to God remain like that of a creature to his creator or of the governed to his governor.

In India too there are dualists. They believe in an extra-mundane personal God who is the repository of all blessed qualities, who is omnipotent, omniscient, and all-loving; who creates the universe, not out of nothing, but out of the material of nature, which is eternal. God is the efficient cause of the universe and nature is the material cause. They do not believe that the human soul comes into existence all of a sudden and has a beginning as the Christians do, but that it existed in the past and will exist in future from eternity to eternity. They say that as nature is eternal so are the individual souls. Each soul after remaining potentially in nature for some time, comes out of the causal state at the beginning of a new cycle of creation or evolution, and manifests in gross forms, one after another, going through the different grades of evolution according to its desires and tendencies, until it reaches perfection. After reading the new Testament one cannot get any definite conception of the nature of the human soul, nor of its destiny, but in the dualistic system of India one learns that the human soul is like an infinitesimal particle of nature containing the divine light of intelligence and divine power in an infinitely small degree, whose duty is to serve God through prayers, good deeds, good thoughts and love. God loves all, and He can be loved

in return. Those who worship Him through unswerving devotion and unselfish love obtain freedom from the dark side of nature; that is from the bondages of ignorance, selfishness, suffering, misery and all other imperfections; and after death they live a life of bliss and perfection forever in the presence of the eternal personal God. This is salvation according to the dualists in India. They do not mean by salvation going to heaven, but on the contrary, hold that heaven is a realm where one goes to enjoy the results of one's good deeds, and at the end of such a period of celestial enjoyment one comes back to earth and is born again.

Each soul is bound to attain this salvation, sooner or later. Those who do wicked deeds reap the results of their actions and thoughts, not by going to any place of eternal fire and punishment, but by being born again and again until they reach the state of spirituality, devotion and righteousness. The monotheists in India do not believe that God punishes any one, as He is the embodiment of Divine love. Nor do they believe in eternal suffering, nor in any Satan or creator of evil. But they do believe in a temporary suffering of the wicked, which is the reaction of their own wicked acts. They do not blame God or charge Him with partiality, they do not blame Satan, but they take upon their own shoulders the whole burden of responsibility. These dualists believe that wherever there is life there is the manifestation of the divine light of intelligence, however

small it may be, however imperfect the expression of intelligence may be. From the minutest insect up to the highest gods (Devas) or angels, or bright spirits, each individual life is filled with a ray of that Divine Sun. They sometimes compare God with a gigantic magnet and the individual soul with the point of a needle, and say as a magnet attracts a needle so the great God attracts the individual souls toward Him through love, and magnetizes them as it were by His divine grace and power. Although they believe that each soul is separate from God and from other souls, yet its relation to God is like that of a ray to the sun or of a spark to fire. Their conception of the human soul is with attributes, with qualities and character, with mind, intellect, sense-powers, and the finer particles of ethereal matter which give foundation to grosser physical forms. In short, it is the same as the individual ego, as we call it, or the spiritual body as it is called in the New Testament. According to these dualists, God can be worshipped by man through various relations, such as by calling Him master, or father, or mother, or brother, or friend, or son, or husband. These relations depend upon the nature and characteristics of the worshipper. Some like to think of themselves as servants of God, others as friends, or brothers, or sons. They say, as the same man in a household can be the master in relation to his servants, the father in relation to his children, a friend, a brother, or a husband in relation to his wife, so the

same God can appear in all those various relations to different devotees according to their modes of thinking. Such is the conception of the individual soul and its relation to God according to the dualistic thinkers of India.

Next to the dualistic conception of God comes that of the qualified non-dualists. These thinkers go a little deeper than the dualists. Starting from the dualistic standpoint they go a step further toward the realization of Truth and of man's relation to God. According to them, God is no longer extra-cosmic, no more outside of and separate from the universe, but He is intra-cosmic. He is no longer governor from the outside, but *Antar-yamin*, inter-ruler. He is immanent and resident in nature. He interpenetrates every particle of the universe. The physical universe is His gross physical body. He has infinite eyes, infinite ears, and infinite organs of other senses. He sees through the eyes of all living creatures of the universe. He hears through all the ears that exist in the universe. He has infinite heads. The Wind is His breath. His mind is the sum total of individual minds, or in other words, the Cosmic Mind. His intellect is the Cosmic intellect. His soul is the Cosmic ego, or the soul of the universe. He is no longer the creator of the universe, or one who fashions the materials of nature and gives names and forms to the phenomena from outside like a potter or a carpenter. He is not the efficient cause alone, as the dualists main-

tain, but He is both efficient and material cause of the universe. He creates, that is, He projects into the physical space the phenomenal forms out of nature or divine energy which is in His body. He is the one living Being in the universe. He is the one stupendous Whole, and we are but parts.

In that process of projection or evolution of nature, infinite numbers of individual souls which existed in His body from the beginningless past, come out on the physical plane, take forms, play their parts according to their desires, and fulfil the purpose of life by going through the process of evolution. Each individual soul is like a spark which emanates from the huge bonfire of God, and lives in and through God, but it cannot be called God. God dwells everywhere. He pervades the universe and nature, and yet He transcends them both. He is infinite but personal, without any human form. The qualified non-dualists say that God cannot be confined to any form, because every form is a limitation in space by time, while God is unlimited by space or time. He is beyond space and time. Still, He can appear in various forms to satisfy the desires of his worshippers. Our body is a part of God's body, our mind is a part of the divine or universal mind, our will is a part of the universal or cosmic will. This is called the qualified non-dualistic conception of God, because it looks at unity as qualified by variety. That is, God is one, the universe and human souls are one in God, yet each retains its

own separate individuality. God is like a tree and we are like branches thereof. It reminds me of the simile of the vine and its branches which Jesus the Christ gave to show man's relation to God. The same idea underlies His saying, "My Father is greater than I." According to this class of thinkers the individual soul possesses all the qualities of the human ego. As our ego has mind, intellect, sense-power, memory, and is limited by other egos, so is the soul. After the death of the body the soul contracts its qualities within itself, and at the time of its birth it expands those latent powers. Our ego or soul is a part of the cosmic ego, or the soul of the universe, or God.

Next to these comes the class of monistic or non-dualistic thinkers. They do not stop where the qualified non-dualists have stopped, but they push their investigations still further, and analyze the nature of the individual soul or ego, and ultimately discover the unchangeable essence of the ego. They are the seekers of the unchangeable reality of the universe. In their search they will not stop until they have reached that truth which is immutable, eternal and one. They adopt the scientific methods of analysis, observation and experiment and apply them to solve the subtlest and most abstract problems. Analyzing the nature of the ego, they find that it cannot be the unchangeable reality or immutable Truth, because the mind, with its various modifications, such as intellect, memory, etc., is constantly changing.

After patient research and continuous struggle to know the ultimate Truth, these great monistic sages realized that the ego, or the individual soul, is nothing but a changeful receptacle of a still subtler substance, which is unchangeable and eternal. They called it the Atman in Sanskrit.

There is no word in the English language which conveys the meaning of this Atman. It is much finer than ego or the living soul of the individual. Atman is the unconditioned reality in man; and the living soul or the individual ego is the subtle covering of the Atman, like the globe that covers the light of a lamp. That Atman is not a part of the universal ego, but it is one with the unconditioned Reality of the universe, which is called in Sanskrit Brahman, or the All-pervading Spirit, or the Absolute. Sometimes it is called Paramatman, which was translated by Ralph Waldo Emerson as Over-Soul. It is finer than the Cosmic Ego or God. It is sexless, neither masculine nor feminine. It is sometimes translated by the Oriental scholars as the SELF. But self is a confusing word. Some people mistake it for the Anglo-Saxon self, which acts and progresses, and which is another name for the ego.

According to the non-dualistic conception of the true nature of man, the Atman or the Self, or the spiritual essence of man, is the same as the Brahman, the spiritual or divine essence of the universe. The relation of the true nature of man to God is no longer like that of a

creature to the Creator, nor like that of a son to his father, nor like that of a part to the whole, but it is absolute oneness on the highest spiritual plane. The Atman, or the divine nature of man, is the same as the absolute divinity of the Cosmos. On that highest spiritual plane there is no distinction, no idea of separation, no idea of creation. All ideas of separateness, all differentiations of phenomenal names and forms, merge into the absolute ocean of reality which is unchangeable, eternal and one. The essence of the Creator is infinite, and it interpenetrates the phenomenal forms as the external space pervades every particle of atoms of the phenomenal world. That essence is like the all-pervading background of the phenomenal appearances. Phenomena are like the waves in the ocean of Infinite Reality. Individual souls are like so many bubbles in that ocean of Absolute Existence. As a bubble rises on the surface of the ocean, takes a form, lives there, comes near other bubbles, lives in a group for some time, moves in the company of others, changes its size, perhaps, and goes down again; so the individual soul rises in that ocean of infinite existence, appears in various forms, passes through the different stages of evolution, and lives there for ever and ever, sometimes as manifested and at other times as unmanifested. The light of intelligence in the soul or ego is due to the reflection of the Atman or Divine Spirit on the mirror of the heart of the ego or soul. Therefore the soul is called the image or reflection of the

Atman or Divine Spirit.

This idea is beautifully expressed in one of the Upanishads: "In the cave of our heart have entered the two—the Atman or the Divine Spirit, and the individual ego or soul. Dwelling on the highest summit, or the ether of the heart, the one witnesses the other, while the soul drinks the rewards of its own works. The wise men and sages describe the one as the light, and the other as the reflection, image or shadow." (Katha Upanishad, ch. iii, verse 1.) You will notice here what a deep meaning lies at the back of the expression, "Man is the image of God." The ancient Vedic sages used the same expression in a sense which many of the best philosophers of the Western world have failed to grasp or comprehend. Thus the most ancient Monistic sages explained the highest relation of the individual soul to Atman or Divine Spirit, by calling it the reflection or image of the Self-effulgent Light of God. But as a reflection cannot exist independent of the light whose reflection it is, so the soul of man cannot exist independent of Atman. Therefore the true nature of the soul is Atman, the divine and real spirit which cannot be divided into parts and is One Absolute Source of existence, intelligence and bliss. Such is the monistic or non-dualistic explanation of the relation of the soul to God.

Vedanta philosophy recognizes these three explanations. It says that the relation of the soul to God

varies as the conception of the individual soul and of God becomes finer and higher. Starting from the gross form of body, when a real and earnest seeker after Truth marches onward toward the Absolute, he passes through all the intermediate stages until he reaches that state of divine communion where he realizes the oneness of the Atman, or the true nature of man with Brahman, the cosmic Divine essence, or the Absolute Reality of the universe. Then he declares, I am Brahman, I am He, I am in the sun, in the moon, in stars; I am one with the All-pervading Reality; or as Jesus the Christ said, "I and my Father are one." He does not use the word "I" in its ordinary sense of ego or human personality, but in the sense of Atman, or Divine essence. Jesus was a dualist when He prayed to His Father in heaven, and he was a monist when He said, "I and my Father are one," "The kingdom of heaven is within you." A Vedanta philosopher or sage after realizing that absolute oneness on the highest spiritual plane of the Atman, says, when he returns to the plane of relativity and phenomena:

"O Lord, when I think of my body, I am Thy servant and Thou art my Master; when I look at my soul, I am Thy part and Thou art the one stupendous Whole; but when I realize my true nature, I am divine and one with Thee, the Absolute Spirit, Such is my conception of my relation to Thee."

WHAT IS AN INCARNATION OF GOD ?

"The Lord says: 'Whenever religion declines and irreligion prevails I manifest Myself to protect the righteous, to destroy evil and to establish true religion' "— Bhagavad Gita iv, 7, 8.

Two great religions of the world advocate the belief that God, the supreme Ruler of the universe, incarnates in human form to help mankind—the one is Christianity, the other is the religion of Vedanta which prevails in India.

Christianity, believing in the existence of one personal God who is the creator, governor and Father of the universe, teaches that this heavenly Father incarnated Himself in human form as Jesus the Christ to show His love, His mercy and kindness for his suffering children as well as to save the world from eternal perdition. It may be interesting to many to know how this doctrine of divine incarnation, unknown to the earliest Christians of the first century after Christ, gradually grew and developed into its present form. Readers of ecclesiastical history are well aware of the fact that no problem troubled the minds of the founders of the Christian church and of Christian theology so much as this one of the divine incarnation of Jesus the Christ. During the early periods of church history, indeed, no other question was con-

sidered to be of such vital importance as that of the heavenly Father's incarnation in the form of Jesus of Nazareth. Although for many of the uneducated masses this problem appears to have been satisfactorily solved by the wonderfully subtle and apparently logical arguments of certain priests and theologians, still it is not unknown to the educated classes that the acceptance of their solution depended largely upon priestly power, upon anathema and upon the persecution of those who refused to receive these arguments as the only correct solution of the problem.

Let us go back for a moment to that time when Constantine the great settled the disputes of the bishops regarding the incarnation of the Supreme Being in the form of the Son of Man. In the first place we should remember that the modern Christian idea of divine incarnation is founded upon the belief in the Trinitarian doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the memorable text of the First Epistle of John: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one" (ch. V. 7), Before the doctrine of the divine incarnation of Jesus the Christ was established and accepted by the church, the early Christians believed in the Trinity and constantly discussed the most subtle and profound questions concerning the nature, generation, distinction and qualities of the three divine persons of the mysterious triad. At that time the majority of Christian thinkers

believed in Jesus of Nazareth as the son of God, but they did not dare declare that he was "God himself in human form," the second principle of the blessed Trinity. It was Justin Martyr, a Christian convert of the Platonic school and believer in the Platonic doctrine of the Trinity, who about the middle of the second century for the first time promulgated the idea that Jesus the Christ, the son of God, was the second person in the Triune Deity and the creator of the universe. He is the earliest writer to whom the origin of this idea can be traced, and he did not ascribe his opinion to the Scriptures but to the special favor of God.

The Trinitarian controversies which first broke out in the Christian schools of Alexandria in Egypt, the land of Trinities, took a new form during the time of Constantine the Great, the chief point of debate being to define the relation of the son to the Father. The church of Alexandria was the most powerful of all the churches at this period, and it was ruled by Trinitarian bishops who took part in all these discussions. One of the most prominent candidates for the office of bishop was Arius, the celebrated originator of the Arian doctrines and a Presbyter of the Alexandrian church. He and his followers maintained, in opposition to the other bishops, that the son of God was merely a creature or a created being, that there was a time when he did not exist. He said: "If the Father begot the Son, he that was begotten had a beginning in existence; from this it is evident that

there was a time when the Son was not in being, it therefore follows that he had his existence from nothing." This argument was the strongest of all the blows which were given to the Trinitarian doctrine, as well as the most potent against the divinity of Jesus the Christ, because it evidently denied the co-eternity of the Father and the Son by proving the subordination of the Son to the Father, and, in consequence, inequality between them. It also indirectly implied that there was a time when the blessed Trinity did not exist.

The question was vehemently discussed again and again in public debates by bishops and Christians, and gradually the strife spread so far that the Jews and pagans amused themselves by giving theatrical representations of the contest on the stage, the point of their burlesques being the equality of the age of the father and son. The violence of the controversy at last reached the point where imperial force was needed for the decision. Emperor Constantine, being referred to, summoned the council of Nicea in 327 A. D. and settled the dispute of the bishops by formulating the famous Nicene creed and attaching to it the anathema: "The holy Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes those who say that there was a time when the Son of God was not, that before he was begotten, he was not, and that he was made out of nothing or out of another substance or essence and is created or changeable or alterable."

In this manner the so-called satisfactory solution of

that most bewildering problem of the divine incarnation of Jesus was arrived at, and it was accepted, not because of the unanimous opinion of all the members of the council, but simply because the majority of the bishops were in favour of it. After this decision Arius was excommunicated for his heretical ideas, while his followers, who were quite numerous, were cruelly persecuted and their writings destroyed. Since that time the bishops and clergy have been forced to accept the doctrine of the Trinity as also that of the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth.

Although the question of the incarnation of the omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient heavenly Father in human form was thus apparently solved by the church and theologians, still it has not ceased to rise again and again in the thoughtful minds of different people in different countries, disturbing their peace and frequently driving them into agnostic and atheistic beliefs. Many a soul has often cried aloud in despair: "What a revolting absurdity it is to think that the infinite and almighty Creator and Ruler of the infinite universe should be born in a manger, should suffer from hunger and thirst, should be tempted by the devil, chastised and scourged by ordinary mortals and forced to ignominious death upon the cross!" Devout Christians do not dare to see this absurdity or to express their opinion for fear of blasphemy and punishment ; but truth-seeking, rational minds cannot rest content with mere doctrines and dogmas

based upon the quicksand of the authority of some book or person.

The question presents itself: "Is there any other way of understanding what is meant by an incarnation of God?" Outside of the Christian religion, there is one other religion or religious philosophy—that of Vedanta—which explains through reason and logic the problem of divine incarnation in human form upon this earth. India is the only country where the origin of this idea can be traced back and where the belief has prevailed from prehistoric times. Long before Jesus of Nazareth was recognized as the incarnation of divinity, the Hindus had a clear conception of this idea. Volumes upon volumes have been written in Sanskrit describing why and how the Supreme Being manifests Itself in human form at different times among different nations.

One of the principal points in which the Hindus differ from the Christians is in maintaining that, if God incarnates or expresses His divinity in human form, His incarnation cannot be limited by time, place or nationality. The Hindus believe that there were many incarnations before and have been many since the advent of Christ, and that all these incarnations of God are equal in greatness, majesty, wisdom and divine powers, especially in the power of saving mankind by setting forth the highest ideal of life and by leading men from the path of unrighteousness to the ultimate goal of all religions. Who could have understood and realized the

highest aim and purpose of human existence, who could have solved the most bewildering questions and problems concerning the true nature and destiny of human souls, if God himself had not revealed these things to mankind from time immemorial ? Could ordinary human beings with their short-sighted intellect and imperfect understanding, living constantly on the animal plane of the senses, deluded by the phantoms of phenomenal appearances and always mistaking the unreal for the real, have ever discovered the ultimate purpose of life and the true nature and destiny of human souls ? Think of the innumerable opinions of atheists and agnostics, materialists and thinkers of different capacities which have bewildered the intellect and understanding of the vast majority of people !

All true knowledge is but the expression of divine wisdom. All the powers that make one great, spiritual, righteous and wise, are only the divine powers manifesting through human forms. Therefore it is said in Vedanta : " All that is glorious, grand, extremely righteous or spiritual, is the outcome of the powers which proceed from the infinite source of all forces and of all energy in nature. Wherever there is anything that is extraordinary or unusually uplifting to the soul, there is a special expression of the divine power."

According to the religion of Vedanta, the incarnation of God means the embodiment of divine qualities and divine powers. It takes place whenever and wherever

such a manifestation is necessary. The blessed Lord Krishna, one of the great incarnations of divinity, who appeared about fourteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, in speaking of divine incarnations, said :

“ Wherever true religion declines and irreligion prevails and whenever the vast majority of mankind, forgetting the highest ideal of life, travel on the path of unrighteousness which leads to the bottomless abyss of ignorance, misery and sorrow, the Supreme Being manifests His divine powers to establish righteousness and true spirituality by assuming a human form and living in our midst, but at the same time showing to all that He is the real master of nature and absolutely free from all the bondages of the world and its laws.”

Such embodiments may take place at any time in any country. The Hindus believe that there have been many such incarnations of divinity in the past and that there will be many in the future. Krishna, Boddha, Jesus the Christ, Chaitanya, Râmakrishna, each one of these has been considered to be the embodiment of divine qualities and divine powers. The lives and deeds of all of them were superhuman, consequently divine. They were full of the manifestations of such powers as ordinary mortals do not possess.

A divine incarnation is one who shows from childhood that he is a born master of mind, body and senses, and the real Lord of nature, yet who never forgets even for a moment that he has come to the world

to help mankind. He is always conscious of his divine power and he manifests divine glory through every action of his daily life. He never loses consciousness of his oneness with the eternal Truth, or the Father of the universe, the infinite source of wisdom and intelligence. He lives in the world like an embodied soul, possessing perfect peace, tranquillity, happiness and blissfulness, without depending upon the conditions and environments which apparently bind the souls of ordinary mortals.

The difference between an ordinary human being and an incarnation of God lies in the fact that the individual soul of a common man takes birth subject to the laws of Karma, or the laws of causation and of action and reaction, in order to reap the results of the works of his previous births and to fulfil the desires that are latent in him ; while a divine incarnation is the embodiment of his own free will, which alone governs him. Being absolutely free he is not forced by the law of Karma or any other law to take a human body, nor does he wish to fulfil any of those desires that proceed from the selfish nature of ordinary mortals. His soul is not subject to the law of evolution like that of any other being. He is absolutely perfect from the very moment that he assumes human form through the inscrutable power of his own omnipotent, supreme will or *Mâyâ*. Although such an incarnation of God is beyond birth and death, he still apparently submits, for the time being, to the conditions

of the human plane, and obeys the laws that govern that plane ; yet at the same time he makes people realize that he is the master of nature, not its slave, and that in reality he does not obey its laws but that the laws of nature obey his omnipotent will. Ordinary people, whose spiritual eyes are not open, may not see the difference that exists between his actions and those of a common mortal and may treat him like an ordinary man ; but those who are highly advanced in spirituality, who understand the true nature of the individual soul and of God and of their mutual relation, see the difference at once, recognize his divinity and worship him as the ideal embodiment of divine powers and divine qualities.

It is for this reason that the blessed Lord Krishna, the Hindu Christ, says in the Bhagavad Gîtâ : “ People who are deluded by my mysterious power of Mâyâ, do not know Me as unborn and unchanging ; I am not manifest to them. The unintelligent regard Me in the light of an ordinary being with a material form which is the result of past actions, and know not that I assume at will glorious and holy forms for the protection of the world.”

The religion of Vedanta teaches that such incarnation of Divinity are not limited by distinctions of sex ; they may appear in masculine or in feminine form according to the needs of the time and place. To the sexless Supreme Being who is both the Father and Mother of the Universe, the masculine and the feminine form are

of equal value and importance. It is for this reason that amongst the Hindus in India are to be found many incarnations of Divinity in the form of woman.

The latest divine incarnation was one who appeared in the middle of the nineteenth century. He lived near Calcutta and his name was Râmakrishna. He is to-day worshipped by thousands of educated Hindus just in the same way as Jesus the Christ is adored and worshipped in Christendom. From his childhood he showed his divine power and set an example of absolute purity and divine spirituality, like an embodiment of those blessed qualities which adorned the characters of previous incarnations, such as Krishna, Buddha, or Jesus the Christ. Those who had the good fortune to see and be with him even for a short time, had their eyes opened to the truth that he was absolutely superhuman. Although he had received no school education, his wisdom was vast. He was the storehouse, as it were, of unlimited knowledge, and he showed at every moment of his life that he was the absolute master of his mind, body and senses, that he was entirely free from all the conditions that make an ordinary mortal slave to passions and desires. He was like the personification of the Sermon on the Mount. No one could ever find the slightest flaw in his noble and divine character.*

* Those who wish to know more about the life of this divine man and why he is worshipped as a Saviour of mankind, may read Swami Vivekananda's lecture on "My Master," or "Life and Sayings of Râmakrishna," by Prof. Max Müller.

At one time he was asked : " What is the difference between a holy sage and an incarnation of God who is called the Saviour of mankind ?" He answered : " A holy sage is one who has realized God through great pain, long prayers and severe penances and after much trouble has saved himself from the attractions of the world, but he has not the power to save others ; while a Saviour is one who can easily save hundreds without losing his own spirituality. A holy sage may be compared to a reed floating in the ocean of life, which cannot bear the weight of even a crow, but when a Saviour descends He easily carries thousands across the ocean like a large, powerful steamer which moves swiftly over the waters towing rafts and barges in its wake. The Saviour, like the most powerful locomotive, not only reaches the destination himself, but at the same time draws with him loads of passengers eager to go to the abode eternal of Truth."

Such is the power and strength of an incarnation of God. An ordinary person may strive and after a long struggle may attain to the realization of truth which is salvation, but with a Saviour, this is not the way ; he comes to help and save others. Whosoever worships and is devoted to any of these Saviours will, through that power of devotion alone, reach the ultimate goal of all religions. As Jesus the Christ said : " Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, " so the other incarnations of Divinity like

Râmakrishna, Buddha and Krishna spoke to their followers, saying in the words of Krishna :

“ Giving up all the formalities of religion, come unto me, take refuge in me and I will give thee rest and make thee free from sins; grieve not, I will also give thee eternal peace and everlasting happiness,”

SON OF GOD.

" The Divine Lord says : ' A portion of Myself hath become the living Soul in the world of life from time without beginning.' "
—Bhagavad Gita, xv, 7,

It is a general belief among Christians that nearly two thousand years ago the only begotten Son of God descended upon this earth to save the souls of sinners from eternal perdition. Thoughtful people, however, may wish to enquire into the true significance of this expression " Son of God." Again and again are asked the questions : " Why should Jesus the Christ alone be called the only begotten son of God ?" " In what sense was he the son of the heavenly Father ?" " Is not every individual a child of the heavenly Father when it is said in the 14th chapter of Deuteronomy, ' Ye are the children of the Lord your God ;' or when Moses said, ' Is not he thy father that hath bought thee, hath he not made thee and established thee ?,' " (Deut. xxxiii, 6.) And the Hindu asks: " Why should we not recognize the divine sonship in Krishna, Buddha, Ramakrishna and in other Saviours of the world ? "

All these and similar questions disturb the minds of those who are not satisfied with the sectarian explana-

tions regarding the sonship of Jesus the Christ which they have been hearing over and over again from their childhood. Of course we have nothing to say to those whose minds are contented with such explanations, or who believe in the literal meaning of the passages descriptive of the supernatural birth and miraculous deeds of the only begotten son of God. But there are many who do not believe in miracles, who do not accept anything upon hearsay or because it has been written in a certain book or been declared by a certain great personage. They wish to go to the very bottom of things before they accept them as true ; they want to know in what sense the divine sonship of the heavenly Father was understood by Jesus of Nazareth and his direct disciples.

It is extremely difficult for any one to know exactly what Jesus meant by his sonship since he has left no writings of his own. We can only gather some idea from the interpretations of his followers and from the writers of the four authentic gospels. After studying carefully the synoptic gospels we learn that there were among the authors of these books two conceptions of the son of God. Matthew and Luke accepted Jesus the Christ as the only begotten son of God because of his supernatural birth, which was caused by the inscrutable power of the heavenly Father. According to these two Gospels it was a miracle ; and upon this miraculous conception of Mary and the supernatural birth of Jesus depends the popular meaning of the divine sonship of

Jesus the Christ. All the orthodox sects and denominations of Christianity, accepting the miracles described in Matthew and Luke as literally true, give this miraculous birth as the reason why Jesus alone should be called the only begotten son of God. They do not recognise that other Saviours of the world, like Buddha and Krishna, had a similar supernatural birth and that their deeds were as miraculous as those of Jesus the Christ. If we ignore them, it will be quite easy for us to accept Jesus the Christ as the only begotten son of God.

The other conception of the son of God which we find in the fourth gospel, has a very deep philosophical significance. Before we discuss this point, let us understand clearly what conception of God the Jews had, both before and after the time of Jesus the Christ. We know that the Jewish idea of God was at that time purely monotheistic. The God of Judaism was the creator and governor of the universe; He dwelt in a heaven far above mundane existence; He was so high and separate from the world, so extra-cosmic, so great, so majestic and so transcendent, that no one could approach Him, no one could live after seeing Him face to face. Consequently there was a wide gulf of separation between God and man, between the creator in heaven and the creature on earth. The idea of divinity in man was unknown to the Jews; such an idea would have been considered blasphemous by them. The Jews could never believe that Yahveh would stoop so low as to come down on the human

plane or to live in a human form. The same spirit prevails among the Jews of to-day, and it has also been inherited by the Mahometans. According to them God is far above man, no human being can ever represent His divinity, and there can be no other relation between man and God, between the creature and his creator, than that of a servant to the all-powerful master, or that of a subject to the most tyrannical monarch. The passages that have been quoted from the Old Testament like. "Ye are the children of God," meant nothing more than the fatherly goodness of the Creator and the implicit obedience of the creature, as that of a dutiful son to his father. They were never meant in the sense in which the Christians understand the divine sonship of Jesus the Christ. Through the paternal goodness of Yahveh, Abraham became the friend of God and Adam became the son of God, as described in the thirty-eighth verse of the third chapter of Luke.

Nearly two centuries before the advent of Jesus the Christ, when the Jews came in contact with the Greeks, they found in Greek mythology a belief in Zeus-pitar or Jupiter, who was conceived as the Supreme Deity and the creator of the universe. He was not only the father of the gods and of the whole world, but also the father of the most powerful kings and heroes, who were called the children or the "offspring of Zeus" in the literal sense of these terms. We all know that the gods of Greek mythology could marry mortal women

of virtuous character and could beget children, while mortal men were allowed to marry goddesses. Æacus, for instance, was born of Ægina but his father was Zeus the Supreme Deity ; while Achilles was the son of the goddess Thetis by a mortal father named Peleus.

These ideas, however, were not acceptable to the Jews ; on the contrary, they were considered as blasphemous and were rejected by the orthodox Hebrews. History nevertheless tells us that the worship of Zeus-pitar or Jupiter was introduced into Babylon and Northern Palestine by Antiochus Epiphanes between 175 and 163 B. C. The orthodox Jews revolted against this innovation ; still there were many liberal-minded Jews among the Pharisees who liked the idea, accepted it and preached it. Among these was Rabbi Hillel, one of the most prominent of Jewish priests of that epoch, who lived a few years before Christ and died when Jesus was ten years of age. He was considered by many scholars as the true master and predecessor of Jesus and was held in great esteem by the Pharisaic sect of the Jews. He inculcated the belief in the merciful and fatherly character of Yahveh like that of Zeus-pitar, and it was he also who introduced the golden rule for the first time. At the same moment Philo and the Neo-Platonist Jews in Alexandria were teaching the fatherly character of Yahveh and the only begotten sonship of the Greek Logos or the Word. Philo was a contemporary of Jesus, but he never even mentioned his name. Many of the

Oriental scholars and higher critics of the New Testament say that the writer of the Fourth Gospel must have been a follower of Philo, because in this gospel alone Jesus the Christ is identified with the Greek Logos, which was explained by Philo as the only begotten Son of the Almighty Heavenly Father.

Some people claim that the Messianic hope of the Jewish prophets was fulfilled in the personality and character of Jesus and that for this reason he was called the Son of God; but critical readers of Jewish history know perfectly well that the Jewish conception of a Messiah had nothing to do with the Christian idea of the divine sonship of Jesus the Christ. History explains to us the social and political conditions of those days which gave rise to the Messianic conception of a deliverer from the sea of misfortune in which the Jewish nation was well-nigh drowned. For centuries the Jews had been conquered and subdued by the Persians, Greeks and other stronger powers around them. Social intrigues, political insurrections, rebellions, and constant wars raged in almost every community and kept the people busy for many years before, during, and after the time of the Babylonian captivity. Such a period naturally kindles the fire of patriotism in the hearts of a nation and forces its members to be active in every possible way. The misfortunes and calamities which befell the descendants of Israel made them remember the promises of Yahveh, which had been handed down to them through the

writings of the prophets, and compelled them to seek supernatural aid for the fulfillment of those promises.

The unconquerable pride of the sons of Israel which made them feel that they were the chosen people of Yahveh, the only true God, who was their director and governor, stimulated their minds with the hope that through the supernatural power of Yahveh the kingdom of their ancestors would be restored, that a member of David's house would appear as the Messiah (the Anointed), and sit on their throne, unite the twelve tribes of Israel under his sceptre and govern them in peace and prosperity. This was the first conception of a Messiah that ever arose in the minds of the Jews. It was the principal theme of the Jewish poets and prophets who lived during the Babylonian exile. The glory of the house of Israel and the earthly prosperity of the worshippers of Yahveh were the highest ideals of the Jews. They did not mean by Messiah a spiritual saviour of sinners from eternal perdition, for they did not believe in eternal life of any kind.

The Christian idea of a Messiah as the Saviour of the world and a deliverer from sin and evil does not owe its origin to the Messianic hope of the Jews but to the Persian conception of the coming of *Sosiosh*, who, according to the promise of Ahura Mazda, would appear in the heavens on the Day of Judgment, destroy the evil influence of Ahriman and renovate the world. Some of the Pharisees accepted this idea. Most probably Jesus

of Nazareth was familiar with this Persian conception of the Messiah, but at the same time he tried to spiritualize the Jewish ideal by preaching a reign of righteousness and justice, instead of a reign of war and strife between nations, a kingdom of peace and love instead of a dominion of earthly power and prosperity.

Thus we see why the Messianic hope of the Jewish prophets was not literally fulfilled in Jesus the Christ, and why the conception of a Messiah does not explain the true meaning of the Christian idea of the divine sonship of Christ. We have already seen how the Judaic conception of God made Yahveh extra-cosmic and unapproachable by human beings, and how a vast gulf of separation was thus created between God and man, between the Creator and his creatures. Many of the prophets felt it strongly, especially when Judaism came in touch with the Hellenic religion which made God so near and approachable to mortals. Various attempts were made to bridge over this gulf of separation between man and God, between the visible and the invisible ; and these attempts eventually resulted in the acceptance of the Logos theory of the Greek philosophers by the Alexandrian Jews, who, as I have already said, lived about the time of Jesus the Christ. The foremost of them was Philo. It was he who first succeeded in showing the connection between the visible world and the invisible creator through the Logos of the Stoics and Neo-Platonists ; but at the same time he gave a new interpretation to this word.

“ Logos ” is a Greek term meaning originally “word,” not in the sense of mere sound, but also of thought embodied in sound—as when we utter a word, the meaning is included in the sound, since words are nothing but the outward expressions of thoughts which are imperceptible. From the time of Heraclitus, the most ancient Greek philosopher, down to the time of the Neo-Platonists this term was used by different thinkers in various senses. According to Heraclitus, Logos meant fire, which was conceived as the all-pervading essence of the universe out of which emanated the individual soul of man. Anaxagoras understood by Logos the cosmic mind, a portion of which was manifested in the human soul ; but the Stoic philosophers who came later, meant by it reason or supreme intelligence. Logos pervaded all matter, and reason or intelligence in man was considered to be a part of the universal reason or intelligence or Logos, through which was established the connection between man and the Divine Mind. In fact Logos always signified the nexus between the manifested world and its Cause.

As has already been said, Philo, being brought up in the Neo-Platonic school, adopted this Stoic theory of Logos to explain the relation between Yahveh, the Supreme Creator of the Semitic religion, and the visible mortal man of this world. But he meant by Logos the ideal creation which existed in the Divine Mind before the actual creation. For instance, before the creation of light God said. “ Let there be light. ” These

words, however, were merely an audible expression of the thought or idea of light that existed in the Divine Mind : the creation of the external light was therefore nothing but the projection or expression of the idea or thought of light in the Divine Mind. As this ideal light may be called the connecting link between the gross visible light and the invisible Divine Mind, so the ideal creation becomes the bridge that spans the gulf of separation between the invisible creator and the gross phenomenal creation, and this idea or thought of the Divine Mind was the Logos of Philo ; it signified the universal thought of the world or the ideal world in the mind of the Divine Being before anything came into existence. Like a dream, the world of ideas appeared in the Divine Mind and was afterwards projected in physical space, just as a carpenter, before he makes a chair, forms a mental image of it and then projects it outside. Since this Logos or the ideal world was the first emanation or expression of the cosmic mind, it was called the " first born " " the only begotten son," " the unique son ; " all these terms, however, were used by Philo and his followers in their poetical or metaphorical sense. According to this theory, the universal Logos included all the ideas and thoughts, or rather the perfect types of all created things that exist in the universe. Before a horse was created, there was a perfect idea or type of horse in the Divine Mind. We do not see this perfect type in the world ; we may see a red or

a black horse, a large or a small horse, but we cannot see the ideal horse. What we call a perfect horse is nothing but the nearest approach to the perfect ideal horse that exists eternally in the Divine Mind. So it is with every created species, thing or being. Before man came into existence there was an ideal man or a perfect type of man in the thought of God, and its projection or physical manifestation became something like that ideal type, because the gross manifestation, being limited by time, space, and causation, cannot be exactly the same as the ideal type which is perfect.

This ideal, or the perfect type of man, which existed in the Divine Mind, is eternal and a part of the universal Logos. All human beings, therefore, are more or less imperfect expressions of that ideal man or Logos or the first begotten son of the Divine Mind. It does not refer to the human form alone, but also to the perfect character or the soul. The individual souls, however perfect or imperfect they may be in the actions of their daily life, are potentially the same as the Logos, or the universal ideal man that existed in God's mind before creation. Every one of us is trying to express as perfectly as possible that ideal type of man in whose cast we have been moulded by the divine hand. Each one of us, therefore, is one with that first begotten son of God—such was the original meaning of the "Son of God" according to Philo and his disciples. We must not forget however, that Philo did not know Jesus the Christ,

although he lived at the same time. The writer of the Fourth Gospel, whoever he may have been, was an advocate of the Logos theory of Philo as well as a believer in Christ as the perfect type of man or the incarnate word of God on earth in the truest sense of the term. It was for this reason that he began the gospel with that famous verse, which has created so much confusion in the minds of Christian theologians: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The meaning of this passage will be clear if we remember that the author of the fourth gospel identified the Word or Logos of Philo with Christ—but not with Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary—and that since then this Christ has become the only begotten Son of God.

Furthermore, it should be understood that the word "Christ," like the word "Logos" of Philo, did not at first mean any particular individual or personality, but it referred to the universal ideal type of man, or the perfect man who dwells in the Divine Mind from eternity to eternity. In this sense the word Christ is as universal as the Logos. It is not confined to any particular person or nationality. We must not confound this ideal impersonal Christ or the only begotten Son of God with the historical personality of Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary; but we must take it in its true spiritual sense, we must understand that each individual soul, being the expression of the first born Son of God, is potentially

the same as the only begotten Son of God, or the child of Immortal Bliss as it is said in Vedanta. When we have realized this impersonal ideal Christ in our souls, from that very moment we have become Christ-like ; and it is then that the impersonal Christ, the only begotten son, will be born within us.

Very few of the true Christians can fully understand this most sublime universal meaning of the divine sonship of Christ and consequently of every living soul. It is extremely difficult for them to extricate their minds from the maze of the traditional personality of Jesus of Nazareth. Students of Vedanta, on the contrary, can comprehend this universal meaning very easily, because in Vedanta the question of the historical personality of an individual, however great and spiritual he may be, is not the principal point to be discussed ; its sole aim is to lift us above all limitations of personality and to lead us to the realization of the universal Truth or the Divine sonship of each individual soul. We are all children of Immortal Bliss, of the omnipotent and omniscient Divine Being. We are not children of some other being, nor are we children of earthly fathers. Parents have not created our souls, but on the contrary our souls existed even before the creation of the world. By our birth-right, as it were, we possess the claim of divine sonship. No one can deprive us of this right. We may think of ourselves at present as mortals subject to birth and death, to grief, sorrow, and misery ; we may call ourselves sons

and daughters of men, but the time is sure to come when our spiritual eyes will be opened to the truth of our being as sons of the Heavenly Father.

The expression "Son of God" shows in a metaphorical way the extrinsic variety and the intrinsic unity that exist between the soul of man and the Supreme Spirit. Outwardly the child is different from the father, but his whole soul is one with the father. If we can leave out the external and go to the innermost depth of our souls, there we shall see and realize our divine relation, and eventually we shall become one with the Supreme Spirit and say, as did Jesus of Nazareth, "I and my Father are one." We must learn that becoming means knowing and knowing is becoming. When we know ourselves as children of earthly fathers, we have become so; and when we know that we are children of God, we become such. This we shall be able to understand better from the parable of the King's son and the shepherd.

There was a very powerful king in ancient India. By his conquests he became emperor, but unfortunately in the prime of life he suddenly died and within a few months his queen passed away giving birth to his only child, the heir to the throne. The other members of the Royal family, in order to usurp the throne, took the babe away, left him in a distant forest, and spread the news that the child was dead. Fortunately he was discovered by a shepherd who went into the forest for hunting. This man had no children of his own and out of compassion

he took the child, brought it home, and gave it to his wife, asking her to take care of it as her own babe. The child was brought up as a shepherd boy ; he did not know anything of the secret, he called the shepherd his father, played with other shepherd boys and tried his best to help his father in his work and to earn a share of his living. He felt sometimes very miserable and unhappy, but he did not know anything better.

After a few years, when he grew older, he happened to meet the old prime-minister of the deceased emperor. The minister, who knew the whole secret, at once saw in the face of that young shepherd a resemblance to the emperor and, instantly recognizing him, addressed and honored him as the prince and heir to the throne. The shepherd youth looked at the minister in great amazement and could not believe his statements ; but the minister persuaded him to come to the palace, made him sit on his father's throne and asked him to take care of the property and govern the empire. Gradually the mind of the young shepherd woke up, as it were, from a dream and he realized that he was the only son of the emperor, governed his empire, and became the emperor.

Even so it is with us, being children of the Emperor of the universe ; we have forgotten our birthright and are acting like the shepherd boy. The moment that we know who we are and what we are, that very moment we shall become conscious of our divine heritage and shall understand that in reality we are not children of earthly

parents but of the Father of the universe. No one can deprive us of this divine birthright.

All the great Saviours of the world, like Krishna, Buddha, Christ, were conscious of their divine sonship from their childhood and never forgot it. They were like the prime-minister ; they came to the shepherd boy of the human soul to give the message of truth, that it is not the son of the earthly shepherd father but of the Emperor of the universe. Let us enter into our divine heritage and rule our heavenly empire. Let us become like the emperor of the universe. Let us follow the paths of the great Saviours of the world, each one of whom manifested in his life the perfect type of man, the ideal man, the Word or Logos. Let us obey their instructions and, by manifesting divinity through humanity, let us become perfect even as the Father in heaven is perfect ; then we shall be happy both here and hereafter and shall attain to that everlasting bliss, which is the goal of all religions.

DIVINE PRINCIPLE IN MAN.

" There is in this body a higher Soul, the Looker-on and the Sanctioner, the Sustainer and the Experiencer, the Mighty Lord, who is also designated the Supreme Spirit." Bhagavad Gita xiii, 22.

" He who is the Omniscient Knower of all, whose glory is manifested in the universe, dwells in the heart and assuming the nature of the mind, becomes the guide of the body and of the senses. The wise who understand this, realize the Self-effulgent, Immortal, and Blissful One."—Mundaka Upanishad ii, 2 Kh. 7.

The study of human nature is the most interesting and the most beneficial of all studies. The more we study ourselves, the better we can understand the universe, its laws, and the Truth that underlies its phenomena. It is said, " man is the epitome of the universe ; whatever exists in the world is to be found in the body of man." As, on the one hand, we find in man all those tendencies and propensities which characterize the lower animals, so on the other, we see him manifesting through the actions of his life all those noble qualities that adorn the character of one whom we honor, respect and worship as the Divine Being. Human nature seems to be a most wonderful blending of that which is animal with that which is called divine. It is like the twilight before day-break, through which the darkness of the night of the

animal nature passes into the glorious sunshine of the supreme wisdom. Human nature may be called the state of transition from the animal into the divine. The animal nature includes the love of self or the attachment of one's self to one's body and to everything related to the body and the senses, desire for sense pleasures and sense enjoyment, the clinging to earthly life, fear of death and the struggle for existence. Each of these qualities or tendencies is to be found in the lower animals as well as in human beings, the difference being only in degree and not in kind.

The savage man who lives like a wild beast in a cave or under trees and does not know how to build a house or cultivate the ground, but who sustains life by depending entirely upon fruits, roots, wild berries, or upon the birds and beasts that he can trap expresses in all the actions of his life nothing more than what we have described as animal tendencies and animal propensities. If the Darwinian theory be true, then we can easily explain why there should be so little difference between primitive man and his distant ancestor, the chimpanzee, or some other member of the anthropoid species. When, however, the same wild man becomes partially civilized by learning to cultivate the land, to raise food and cook it, to build houses and live in communities, he no longer manifests these animal tendencies in their simpler and more savage forms. He gradually adopts more artful methods to accomplish his purposes. For instance,

the struggle for existence depends chiefly upon physical force among savage tribes as well as among animals, while among civilized people in civilized 'countries a similar result in the form of the survival of the fittest is obtained, not by the display of brute force, but by art, skill, diplomacy, policy, lying, strategy, and hypocrisy. These are the offensive and defensive weapons of the so-called "civilized man."

All the vicious qualities and wicked deeds, such as murder, theft, robbery and other crimes which are to be found in civilized communities, are nothing but the expressions of the animal tendencies of man working under the heavy pressure of the rigid laws of society, state and government. They proceed from love of self or, extreme attachment to the animal nature. Being guided by these lower tendencies, man becomes extremely selfish, and does not recognize the rights or comforts of his fellow-beings. On the contrary, he does everything to satisfy the cravings of his body and senses at the expense of his neighbors. But the moment that this savage man, or the man who lives like a lower animal, begins to see the rights of others, learns to love and care for his fellow-beings in the same way that he loves his own dear self and cares for his own belongings, from that time he rises a step higher than the absolutely animal plane ; he becomes truly human and gradually manifests the other qualities and tendencies that accompany this fundamental moral principle—to love one's neighbor as one's self.

Upon this foundation has been built the whole structure of ethics among all nations. The virtuous qualities such as disinterested love for humanity, mercy, justice, kindness towards others, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, all these help the animal man to expand the range of his love of self and to subdue all that proceeds from purely selfish attachment to his own body and senses. The higher we rise above the animal plane, the wider becomes the circle of self-love, and instead of being confined to the body and senses of the individual, it becomes general, covering the selves not merely of dearest relatives and nearest friends, but of neighbors, countrymen, and at last, of all humanity. Thus, the more universal our love of self becomes, the nearer we approach the Divinity, because the Divine Principle is the universal Being whose love flows equally towards all living creatures, as the sun shines equally upon the heads of the virtuous and the wicked.

Anything that is done, not with a motive confined to some particular person, community, or nation, but through love for all humanity, nay with a feeling that seeks the benefit of all living creatures, is unselfish ; consequently it is guided by the universal or Divine Principle. The tendency of the individual self of each man is not to remain confined within one narrow circle, but to go beyond the boundary of the circle of the animal nature, beyond human nature, and ultimately to become universal. All charitable acts and philanthropic deeds are but steps toward that one goal. Well has it been said by Ralph

Waldo Emerson that "the life of man is a self-evolving circle, which from a ring imperceptibly small rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end."

Indeed the self of man has the constant tendency to break down all limitations, to transcend all boundaries, and to become one with the Self of the universe. A human being cannot rest contented, cannot remain perfectly satisfied while living within the limitations of his animal nature. He may appear to be contented for a time, or he may delude himself by thinking that he is perfectly happy and satisfied under these conditions, but the moment is sure to come when, being forced from within, he will give vent to the natural tendency to expand by struggling hard to reach out from the animal self and be united with the universal Self. This tendency is inherent in the very nature of man and its expression will force him to control the lower animal desires and propensities, to become the absolute, master of them, and will gradually lead him to live a moral and spiritual life.

The awakening may come at any time and under any circumstances. One may be suddenly awakened in the midst of all the comforts, luxuries and pleasures of the earthly life. No one can tell when or how such an awakening will come to the individual soul. There have been many instances in India and in other countries of this sudden awakening of the higher tendency of the soul.

Buddha was suddenly awakened when he was enjoying all the pleasures and luxuries of a princely life, when his mind was deeply absorbed in every enjoyment that a human being can possibly have. This awakening, which made Buddha one of the Saviours of the world and which has made others live on this earth like embodiments of Divinity, is not the result of some animal force or some lower tendency to be found in lower animals or in those who live like slaves of passion and desire, but it is the expression of a higher power. It is not love of the body or desire of the senses, not attachment to the pleasures and comforts of the animal self; it is just the opposite. It is love for humanity which makes one forget one's self. It is not a desire to gain something for one's own comfort, but it is a desire to help mankind, to remove their grievances, their sorrows and sufferings and to make them happy. It is not a clinging to earthly existence, but on the contrary, it is the expression of the desire to sacrifice one's own life for the sake of others without having the slightest fear of death. It is not a struggle for existence or the survival of the fittest at the expense of others, but it is the cessation of all gladiatorial fights, struggles and competitions, and the attainment of peace, tranquillity and happiness. It is making the weak to survive and the strong to be kind and merciful toward those who are about to be crushed by social competition. Are not these powers and tendencies diametrically opposed to those which characterize the animal man ?

These higher powers and tendencies have been manifested again and again by different individuals at different times in different countries. The religious history of the world stands as a living witness of this fact. But the question arises, how do we happen to possess these higher tendencies and higher powers? Did we inherit them from our anthropoid ancestors? No indeed, because animal nature cannot produce anything that is not entirely animal. The believers in the Darwinian theory cannot explain the origin of these super-animal or rather super-human tendencies. Have they been super-added to our animal nature from outside by the grace of some extra-cosmic Being, as it is supposed by the dualistic and monotheistic believers of Christianity and other religions? No, such a statement cannot be supported either by reason or by scientific investigation. No one has ever succeeded in proving when and how these powers and higher tendencies were super-added to the human soul. The most rational explanation lies in the statement in the book of Genesis: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him."

Let us understand clearly the meaning of this passage. We are familiar with the popular meaning which seems absurd when we examine it in the light of modern scientific knowledge. In the first place the creation of man out of nothing six thousand years ago does not bear the test of modern geological research and discoveries. On the contrary, we are aware of the fact

that man existed in the Tertiary period, several thousand years before this Biblical creation of man was supposed to have taken place. Secondly, we know that this word "image" does not mean the physical form of man, nor does it refer to the first man Adam, who was supposed to have been the perfect image of God before the Satanic temptation, and who after the fall lost that image and became imperfect, because of which it is said that all human beings have since been born in sin. We cannot believe that all of us were born in sin and iniquity, and, having lost the Divine image within us, thus became the sons of Satan or the Devil. If man was created in the image of God, it could not possibly mean that one particular man of a particular nation at a special time possessed His image, but it was meant for all human beings, irrespective of their caste, creed or nationality.

We must remember that there are no exceptions in the laws of nature. That which we take for an exception refers to some hidden universal law or truth, whether we see or understand it or not ; and that explanation is correct which harmonizes with universal law and points out universal truth. If we admit the existence of the Divine image in one man, we shall have to admit it in all human beings ; otherwise it will be an exceptional case, which cannot be true. As by discovering the cause of the fall of one apple from one tree, we learn the universal law of gravi-

tation, which explains that all apples under those circumstances will fall, so by knowing that one man was made in God's image, we understand the universal truth that all men, women and children of all countries and of all times have been made in the Divine image, whether or not they have felt it, realized it, or manifested it in their actions,

If, on the other hand, it were true that all of us were born in sin and iniquity or under Satanic influence, it would have been absolutely impossible for any man at any time to manifest any of those tendencies and powers which we call divine, and we should be unable to explain why the great sages and spiritual leaders of mankind, who flourished in India and in other countries both before and after the Christian era, could show all the Divine powers and qualities that characterized the only begotten Son of God. Their lives show that every one of them manifested divinity in the actions of their daily life. Therefore we must lay aside the mythical meaning of that scriptural passage and understand it in its universal sense. Furthermore, this universal meaning of the Divine image in man was most strongly emphasized by the great seers of Truth in India from very ancient times and centuries before the book of Genesis was written or thought of. The same universal idea is the foundation of the philosophy and religion of Vedanta.

Vedanta teaches that when we speak of a man or woman as the image of God, we do not mean his or her

physical form, but we mean the individual ego or the soul. If the Divine Being or God be this universal spirit then His image cannot be the physical form of man ; this does not convey any idea or meaning at all. The ego or the soul of each individual man or woman is the image of Divinity. This idea has been beautifully expressed in Vedanta : " In the cave of the heart have entered the two, the one is the eternal, absolute, real, perfect and self-effulgent like the sun, and the other, the individual ego or soul, is like its reflection, or shadow, or image. The one is like the fountain-head of the blessed qualities and the infinite source of all divine powers while the other contains the partial reflection of those qualities and powers. "

Thus according to Vedanta every individual soul, whether it be more or less animal in its thoughts and actions, possesses the Divine image and is no other than the image of the Divine Principle or Being, The Divine Being is one and universal but its reflections or images are many. As the image of the sun, falling upon the dull and unpolished surface of a piece of metal, does not properly reflect the grandeur and power of that self-luminous body, but appears dull and imperfect, so the Divine image, falling upon the dull surface of the animal nature cannot reflect all the blessed qualities, cannot manifest all the divine powers, but, on the contrary, appears animal in its tendencies and propensities. As the same image of the sun will shine forth brighter and

more effulgent when the surface of the metal is polished, so the individual soul will show its brighter and more effulgent aspect and will more fully reflect the divine qualities when the heart which contains the image is polished and made free from the dirt of animal desires and animal tendencies ; then and then alone, this same individual soul will begin to manifest all the blessed qualities like justice, mercy, kindness, and disinterested love for all humanity. These powers are latent in all individuals, but they will be expressed when the heart is purified. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God," said Jesus of Nazareth.

The perfect manifestation of these divine powers depends entirely upon the removal of all obstructions like desire for earthly pleasures, for the enjoyments and comforts of earthly life, attachment to the gross physical body and to the senses, which force the individual soul to remain on the animal plane. Yet however animal the expression of the nature of an ordinary man of the world may be, his soul is still the image of the Divinity which holds potentially in its bosom all divine powers and all blessed qualities. Nay, even the souls of lower animals are potentially divine, according to Vedanta. The evolution of nature is required to bring out these potential tendencies, powers and qualities into their actual or real manifestations. Climbing the ladder of the evolution of nature, each individual soul or germ of life expresses its latent powers, first through the limitations

of the animal nature as animal tendencies and animal desires, and lastly as spiritual powers by rising above all limitations, by transcending the boundaries of the various circles of animal, moral and spiritual nature, and approaching the abode of the infinite Divine Principle. At that time the individual soul becomes absolutely free from the bondage of nature, enjoys the supreme Bliss which is divine, and manifests all the blessed qualities. In passing through these various stages the individual ego studies its own powers, gains experience and realizes all the powers that are lying dormant within the soul.

Many people ask the question, "Why is it necessary for the individual soul to gain experience when it is potentially divine?" The very fact that creation, or projection, means the manifestation of the potential energy as kinetic or as actual reality, forces the soul to objectify and project the dormant activities on to the plane of consciousness; otherwise how can the soul learn its own powers when they are on the subconscious plane? Take as illustration the deep sleep state: when all the sense-powers, such as the power of walking, moving, talking, and all the mental and intellectual functions become unmanifested, do we know in that state what powers we possess? No, certainly not. We can only know their existence when they are brought out on the conscious plane, when they are awakened. Is not this awakening of the dormant powers that lie buried on the subconscious plane, the same thing as the gaining of experience?

If for a moment all the individual souls that exist in the universe should cease to manifest their dormant powers, instantly the relative existence of phenomenal activity would vanish and the whole world would go back to its primordial, undifferentiated condition of nescience, which is almost similar to the unmanifested state of deep sleep when we do not dream. Therefore each individual soul is bound to gain experience after experience in the process of this manifestation of its latent powers and potential energy. Having experienced the powers and actions of the animal nature with their results, the soul longs for higher manifestations, tries to rise above that plane, and after realizing the effects of the moral and spiritual nature, it reaches perfection. In this state the soul becomes absolutely happy and contented, and transcending the limitations of sense-powers, self-love and selfishness, it manifests the blessed qualities in the actions of its every-day life.

This idea was illustrated by an ancient sage in India thus : " Two birds of the most beautiful plumage dwell upon the tree of life, they are bound together by the tie of closest friendship. The one sits calm, serene, contented, peaceful and happy, and constantly watches the movements of his friend like a witness ; while the other bird flies and hops from branch to branch, being attracted by the sight of the sweet and inviting fruits which the tree of life bears. When he is drawn toward a fruit, he tastes it and enjoys the sensation ; then he tries another

which appears more attractive, but unfortunately when he tastes it, he finds it extremely bitter and does not like it. (We must remember here that the tree of life is not like an ordinary tree ; it bears all kinds of fruits from the sweetest to the bitterest.) Having tried the various fruits according to his desires, the bird happens to come to one that is exceedingly bitter, and having tasted it, he suffers intensely, and unhappy and distressed, he remembers his friend, whom he had forgotten for the time being. He looks for him and at last finds him seated on the top of the tree, calm, peaceful and perfectly contented. He envies his peace, happiness and contentment and slowly approaches him. As he comes nearer and nearer, lo ! he is forcibly drawn into the perfect being of that witness-like friend, for he was his reflection or image."

The bird which flies from branch to branch, which enjoys and suffers, is the individual ego or the living soul of man. The fruits of this tree of life are nothing but the results of all the good and bad acts which the ego performs ; and the witness-like friend is the perfect Divine Being, whose image the individual soul is. Thus having experienced all the fruits of our good and bad deeds, when we become discontented and unhappy, we seek our true, eternal friend, admire him, aspire to attain to his peace and happiness, go nearer and nearer, and ultimately become one with him. It is then that we feel happy and contented, it is then that true peace and

happiness come.

As the image or reflection of the sun cannot exist for a second independent of that self-luminous heavenly body, so the individual soul, being the image of God, cannot exist even for a moment without depending upon the Divine Principle. The individual ego owes its life, its intelligence, its intellect, mind and all other mental and physical powers to that infinite source of all powers, all knowledge, all love, and everlasting happiness. In fact the individual soul does not possess anything. All these powers and forces that we are expressing in our daily life, whether animal, moral or spiritual, do not belong to us, but proceed from that one inexhaustible source. Nor is the Divine Principle far from us ; He is the soul of our soul, the life of our life, and the omnipotent essence of our being.

“ The Divine Principle is smaller than the smallest and larger than the largest ; it pervades the infinite space and also dwells in the minutest atom of atoms ; it resides in the innermost sanctuary of the soul of every man and woman ; whosoever realises that omnipresent Divinity, whose image the individual soul is, unto him come eternal peace and perpetual bliss, unto none else, unto none else.”

SINGLE LECTURES.

THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF RELIGION.

" Popular science through its various branches, explains phenomena ; higher science leads to the realization of the Imperishable One. "—*Mundaka Upanishad*, I. 5.

Wonderful indeed is the age in which we are living, and marvelous are the progress and achievements made by humanity in every department of knowledge. Each day new light is dawning upon the horizon of human understanding, dispelling the clouds of ignorance and rending the veils that for ages have covered the sun of eternal Truth. Whether we cast our eyes toward the heavenly bodies far beyond the reach of our unaided sight, or toward the objects nearest to us, we make discoveries through the help of wonderful instruments invented by human ingenuity. We learn to understand laws of nature never understood before, and studying these closely we get new ideas, new explanations, which force us to forget and to throw aside old superstitious belief and childish interpretations of nature and her laws.

This age may be called the " Age of Science. " Science to-day dominates human thought, human reason and all human activities, physical and mental. Art, literature, cooking, walking, dressing, everything must now be in harmony with science. Science stands to-day

triumphant in her own glory because she stands on the adamantine rock of truth. She is dressed in the multi-form colors of the light of truth, her food is truth, and truth is her aim, her life and her soul. Wherever she goes she brings with her the light of truth, which dispels the darkness of ages. After exploring almost all the departments of nature, she has now begun to investigate the vast and mysterious domain of religion. We read to-day such books as "The Science of Religion," "The Religion of Science," etc. In the broad daylight of scientific knowledge, honest reasoning and impartial criticism, men can discuss boldly the basis of a religion, and seek to ascertain whether it is scientific or not. Fanaticism and bigotry are slowly but gradually disappearing. Whoever has once received the revelations of science will not believe in any other revelation without asking questions for and against. The first mental condition of the student of science is a state of unrest, questioning and doubt. Before he accepts anything he wants to look for reasons and evidences. Science teaches us not to believe in anything on the unsupported testimony of any particular person, nor because it has been written in this book or that, nor because our forefathers have believed in it, nor yet because we have been taught from our childhood to accept certain conclusions. She tells us to examine the evidences thoroughly, to weigh the arguments properly ; then to accept them if they satisfy our reason and harmonize with other truths discovered

by the scientific method. Such being the instructions of science, before we accept anything we must first discover whether or not it has a scientific basis. We should exercise the same caution before accepting any doctrine or dogma, any creed or religion.

We find in the Western world to-day two scientific tendencies arrayed in opposition to and fighting against each other. One tendency is to decry religion because it is not in harmony with modern science, because it lacks scientific basis ; while the other is to harmonize religion with logic and science, to make it stand on scientific principles. In the face of the tremendous struggles of these two tendencies, we find many who still believe in the old unscientific dogmas, in thoughts and ideas neither proved by logic nor sanctioned by philosophy.

Those who see no harmony between religion and science ignore the necessity for a religion which does not teach the same truths that have been taught by science. They say, the aim of religion has been to find out the truth and to explain the phenomena of nature, but that its attempt to accomplish that has proved to be a complete failure ; and this, because religion asserts that this universe has been created out of nothing by a personal Being, having a certain name and a certain form. These two assertions are disproved and rejected by scientists. Consequently, they say, what is the good of following any religion ? What benefit can we derive by believing any of these explanations which are not scientific, but

which, on the other hand, narrow our views and ideas ? We find better and more satisfactory explanations of the ultimate truth and of the phenomena of nature in science ; let us, therefore, follow science and forget all the teachings of religion. The majority of those who decry religion and take science in its place, say that the ultimate truth as posited by modern science is unknown and unknowable. There is, then, no necessity to struggle for the knowledge of that ultimate truth, such struggles being useless. We can never know God, we can never know the nature of the soul ; consequently, a religion which teaches something supersensuous is absolutely absurd and impracticable. Yet in the same breath they ask us to take up ethics, to be moral, and to do good to society. But here a question arises, Why shall we be moral ? Why shall we do good to society ? For what motive ? In answering these questions many motives are brought forward, such as for the sake of posterity, etc. These motives are not satisfactory, they do not appeal to our reason, nor do they explain the aim of our life. Why should we be moral for the sake of posterity ? What have we to do with posterity ? Why should we not seek pleasure and happiness all through our lives, and leave posterity to do likewise ? Why should we do good to others instead of injuring them ? If pleasure and happiness be the end of all humanity, and if all our actions end with death, why should we not try to make ourselves happy without considering others ? I do not

see any reason. There would be nothing in the world which could prevent us from committing immoral acts except, of course, the strong power of the law. There would be, then, no moral obligation that could prevent us from doing wicked deeds. These arguments, which try to explain ethics on the ground of the benefit of posterity, do not stand on a firm, logical basis. Thus, the conclusions of those who decry religion and take science in its place not only prevent them from knowing the nature of ultimate truth, but leave them no rational basis for the practice of morality.

Another class of people try to harmonize religion with science, but many of them fail. Some, for instance, by stretching the meaning of the Scripture texts to their utmost tension, try to make them agree with the conclusions of science. But that process is not satisfactory. For instance, the Old Testament teaches that this universe was created in six days, and modern science teaches evolution. It must be shown that Genesis teaches evolution, too. How can this be done? By stretching the meaning of the word "day" and making it stand for "cycle." These people seem to think that texts are like elastic bands, but they do not realize that even elastic bands can only be stretched within a certain limit. No elasticity can stand the stretch of a day into a cycle. It must break. Suppose the six days signify six different cycles. Then what would become of the seventh day, or Sabbath? It ought to be the last cycle, which is simply

absurd. Most of you may be aware that, not very long ago, Mr. Gladstone, the great statesman of England, admitting that there is some truth in the doctrine of evolution, tried to interpret in a most ingenious way the different passages from the Old Testament which give the daily order of creation. He attempted to show that that order is exactly the same as the order of the successive stages of evolution as explained by modern science. In the first place, Mr. Gladstone said that the word "day" here stands for an indefinite period of time, and the word "created" means "originated"; then he explained the main statements of Genesis in the successive order of time, but without giving any measure of its divisions. He claimed that the ninth and tenth verses of the first chapter of Genesis indicate the appearance of land anterior to all life. That is the first period. Next follows a period of vegetable life anterior to all animal life. This constitutes the third "day." Then came a period of animal life, beginning with fishes and fowls. That is the meaning of the 20th verse. After this followed a period of animal life in the order of cattle and creeping things (Verses 24 and 25). And lastly, man was created (Verses 26 and 27). Then Mr. Gladstone said that this order had been so affirmed in our time by natural science that it might be taken as a demonstrated conclusion and an established fact. But, if we examine closely Mr. Gladstone's interpretation of Genesis, and if we compare the order of creation and the division of

time as explained by him with the order and division of time which we find in natural science, we shall see how illogical and unscientific is Mr. Gladstone's interpretation. In the first place, how absurd it is to assume that the morning and evening which we find mentioned in the Scripture have not the least reference to the natural day, but mean a period of any number of millions of years. I think the writer of Genesis never dreamed of such an interpretation of the word "day." Secondly, the word "creation," which for over five thousand years has been taught, explained and held by millions of pious Jews and Christians to signify a certain act of the Deity, will, from the time of Mr. Gladstone, stand for a gradual evolution of one species out of another, an evolution extending through measureless time. Above all, is it possible to conceive of a period of vegetation on the earth antedating the appearance of the sun ? The creation of this luminary occurred on the fourth "day," according to Genesis. The wonder is that so logical and scientific a thinker as Mr. Gladstone should not have seen the inconsistency of such statements. As regards his interpretation of the order which he thinks is affirmed by modern science I shall not now go into the details. Every point of Mr. Gladstone's arguments has been refuted scientifically and logically by the most eminent scientists of Europe. Prof. Huxley has spared no pains to refute Mr. Gladstone from a scientific standpoint. After pointing out the absurdity of Mr. Gladstone's interpretation of

Genesis, he says : "It may seem superfluous to add to the evidence that Mr. Gladstone has been utterly misled in supposing that his interpretation of Genesis receives any support from natural science. I think it is advisable to point out that the facts, as they are at present known, not only refute Mr. Gladstone's interpretation of Genesis in detail, but are opposed to the central idea on which it appears to be based" (Genesis versus Nature). I wish those who still hold that each "day" stands for a period or a cycle would read Prof. Huxley's articles on "Genesis versus Nature" and "Mr. Gladstone and Genesis". Thus, the attempt to harmonize Genesis with modern science has been shown to be impossible by one of the most eminent scientists of this century. So that process also fails.

Others are trying to build a religion of their own by accepting some passages of the Bible and rejecting others; or by selecting according to their choice certain acts of a certain prophet and making those acts the standard of their religion and the basis of their faith. As, for instance, Jesus cured diseases without giving any medicine. Some people think that this power should be the standard of religion, and that a religion which teaches the cure of diseases without the use of medicine is the only true and scientific religion. But I have seen persons who are not at all religious, nor spiritual, who can cure diseases without using any medicine at all. When I was in India, there appeared in Calcutta a certain Mohammedan fakir who became

quite famous for healing incurable diseases without giving any medicine. He did not make a large fortune, however, because he would not charge anything for his cures. In India true healers never make their power a means of accumulating a fortune. The other day I met a physician who had a large practice. Suddenly he found that he had the power of curing diseases simply by touch, and from that time he gave up using medicine, and he now exercises that healing power instead. So you will find that many persons who are not spiritual, who may not know even the name of religion, can cure diseases. Each individual has these powers latent within him, and whosoever will cultivate them will be able to manifest them. This has nothing to do with religion—it is a psychic power. It is not that the followers of Jesus alone had this peculiar power of curing diseases without using any medicine. It was known in India and in other countries several hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus ; and even to-day you will find among followers of different religions, who never heard of the name of Jesus, many who can cure diseases without giving any medicine.

There are growing up in different parts of the country hundreds of sects, and creeds, and each is trying to give a scientific basis to religion. The majority of these accept the ultimate conclusions of science, but at the same time do not know how to harmonize these conclusions with philosophy, metaphysics and religion. Some of them have succeeded

in doing this partially, but others think that it is almost impossible to give a scientific basis to religion—to have a religion based not only on science, but on philosophy, logic and metaphysics ; a religion which will suit the different tendencies of all people, which will answer their questions and demands, and which at the same time will not destroy popular notions, nor antagonize the various sects and creeds.

The advocates of scientific thought will say : We do not want to have a religion which narrows our ideas, or makes us think that our religion is the only true one, or that forces us to find fault with every other religion except our own. The time has come when such narrow views must be broadened, and their places taken by more liberal and more rational ideas which are in harmony with science, philosophy and logic. John Fiske says : Antagonism (between Science and Religion) has been chiefly due to the fact that religious ideas until lately were allied with the doctrine of special creations." Prof. Huxley says : " The antagonism of science is not to religion, but to the heathen survivals and bad philosophy under which religion herself is often well-nigh crushed. True science will continue to fulfil one of her most beneficent functions, that of relieving men from the burden of false science which is imposed upon them in the name of religion." Herbert Spencer says : " The most abstract truth contained in religion, and the most abstract truth contained in science, must be the one

in which the two coalesce. To reach that point of view from which the seeming discordance of religion and science disappears and the two merge into one, must cause a revolution of thought fruitful and beneficial in consequences, and must surely be worth an effort." (First principles.) That abstract truth must not be a particular phase of truth discovered by a particular branch of science, or by a particular sect or creed, but it must be the one where all the various branches of science and philosophy end—the truth which is the goal of all religions, sects, and creeds that exist upon the face of the earth. Truth discovered by science cannot be different from truth discovered by religion, because truth is one and the same. The same truth is the object of science, of philosophy, of metaphysics, as of religion. It can, therefore, be reached through any one of these.

Science asserts that there is one reality, and that that reality is manifested in the universe in various forms. Physical science has proved that unity in variety is the law of nature. The doctrine of evolution, persistence of force and correlation of forces, clearly show that the various forces of nature are nothing but the expressions of one eternal energy. In the same manner mental science has proved that all the different powers that are manifested in our internal nature are nothing but the expressions of the same eternal energy. Science teaches us that there is one life principle manifested in all the various forms of nature that we call living. From the

minutest particle of life up to the highest man, the same life principle is manifested throughout the different stages of evolution. Herbert Spencer says : " Matter, motion and force are not the reality, but the symbols of reality." Moreover, he says in his " Psychology: " The same reality is manifested objectively and subjectively." The same reality expresses in the objective world as matter, in the subjective world as mind ; in the objective world as gravitation, electricity, heat and motion, in the subjective world as intellect, understanding, emotion, will, etc. The reality is one, but the manifestations are diversified. Thus the ultimate conclusion of science is unity in variety. Study all the different branches of science, and after studying you will find that this is the central truth ; from one, these many have evolved. One is the basis and the many are nothing but the expressions of that one. You may call that one God or X, it does not make any difference. If a religion teaches the same unity in variety, then there will be harmony between religion and science, and not otherwise. Is there any religion which teaches unity in variety ? If we read the different scriptures of the world, do we find the expression of that idea ? If we read the Zendavesta, the Bible or the Koran, we do not find it, because these scriptures teach the existence of two spirits, the one good and the other evil. The former is the creator of good, and the latter is the creator of evil ; there is incessant conflict between them. But if we read the writings of

the ancient sages of India we find many expressions which describe in the simplest possible language that unity in variety. Some of these were written one thousand years before the birth of Christ, some five hundred years, some two hundred years, etc. I will quote some sentences from the Upanishads, in illustration: "As one fire coming into this world manifests itself in various shapes and forms, so the One Reality expresses itself in and through the innumerable names and forms of the phenomenal universe." "As the same vibration of ether appears in various shapes and forms, so the One Reality in the universe manifests through a diversity of forms and names." "As from a blazing fire proceed innumerable sparks, so from that one Reality have evolved life, mind, all the organs of the senses, heat, ether, and all that is gaseous, liquid and solid." Many such passages can be quoted from the oldest writings of the Vedic Sages.

Do they not teach the same truth which has been explained by modern science? Show me a single passage in any of the different scriptures of the world which voices a similar thought. But the central idea which we have in these writings is unity in variety. Why is this so? Because in India the ancient seers of truth did not believe in supernatural revelation, but started just as modern scientists start, with the study of physical objects and examined them carefully through the method of observation, experiment and analysis.

They did not separate religion from science, philosophy or logic. But whenever they sought to explain anything, they explained through logic. If an explanation was illogical, they rejected it and tried another explanation ; if that appeared to be unscientific, they rejected it also. Their standard was reason and experience. Therefore they succeeded, even in that early age, in understanding the ultimate conclusions of modern science. Truth is eternal. It does not make any difference whether you discover it, or I discover it. The Indian sages did not explain in detail all the different stages through which they arrived at their conclusions, but we find that the central idea of the philosophy and religion they taught is unity in variety. Consequently, it harmonizes with science. The philosophy of these ancient seers is known in India as the Vedanta. There is no need to stretch the meaning of any of its texts to make them agree with the conclusions of science, because it is in no way antagonistic thereto. It accepts all the truths that have been discovered by science, and all that may be discovered in future. It has room for them all, because it is not limited. It depends upon principles ; it deals with principles, and it leaves all details to be worked out by scientists. It simply teaches the principles and generalizations. At the same time it claims that that truth which science calls " unknown and unknowable " can be realised. It is more than known and knowable ; it is the nearest to our hearts, it is nearer than the mind,

nearer than intellect, nearer than body, nearer than senses. It is nearer than our souls even, for it is our real nature. Our real nature is Truth, and not falsehood, and that real nature is expressed within each individual soul. We shall not have to go outside of this universe to find that Truth. If we look within, we shall find it there. Vedanta admits that this Truth is unknown and unknowable, but with this difference ; Vedanta says it is unknown and unknowable by the mind, but known and knowable by the Spirit. By that Spirit it does not mean any shadowy form, or ghost ; it means eternal Truth, the light within us, the basis of our consciousness ; that which illumines our intellect, our mind, our senses, our bodies, and all the external things of the universe. Vedanta is based on the doctrine of evolution. Prof. Huxley admits this. He says : " There are some philosophies in India which express most clearly the doctrine of evolution." Moreover he says, " To say nothing of the Indian sages to whom evolution was a familiar notion ages before Paul of Tarsus was born."

Vedanta gives a scientific basis to religion, because it explains religion through science ; or in other words, through the accepted rules of inductive and deductive logic, and it accepts within its limits the supremacy of reason. To admit the rules of logic and the supremacy of reason is to admit the two points which make any system scientific. If we find these two are satisfactorily

worked out in any system, then we know it is scientific. If we apply the rules of logic and science to many of the different systems of religion that exist to-day on the face of the earth, what will become of them? They will fall to pieces. The time for asserting most dogmatically that my religion is true because it is based upon some facts which are historic, has gone by. Most of the so-called historical events have been proved by science to be mythological stories. Any religion that is based on such a foundation has received an irreparable blow from modern science; it has been shaken to its very foundations. It by no means follows, however, that such a religion is to be swept away, or to be crushed out of existence. Then, indeed, the discoveries of modern science would appear deplorable. The truth is that every religion has inherent in its very nature a surer basis than dependence on facts of doubtful historical value. Shall we not therefore try to discover a firm basis for our religion, a basis not to be shaken by the attacks of infidels, or so-called heretics? We ought to try to find such an unassailable foundation. The world now needs a scientific religion. It needs the supremacy of reason over blind faith. It needs a religion which will teach, with science, unity in variety, and which will accept all the conclusions at which modern science has arrived. Nay, more, the world to-day needs a universal religion that will accept all sects, creeds, denominations and religions that exist upon the face of the

earth as so many manifestations of underlying unity.

We have read in the pages of history what effects all these religious quarrels, animosities and persecutions have produced among different nations. We do not want such persecutions any more. Let us regard all the varying religious views with a feeling of love. Let us say that we are all travelling towards the same goal, although our paths may be different. Each individual may take the path suited to his need. But let us ever remember that all religions lead to the same goal. We do not want this religion, or that religion, this sect or that sect, but we need a religion without any name ; a religion which is the basis of all special religions a religion which can include them all, and one which harmonizes with science, philosophy and metaphysics. Some may claim "my religion would serve this purpose." Others may say that their religion would be the best. Let all religions try to supply the demand, and the fittest will survive.

"Truth will triumph and not falsehood. The worship of Truth leads to the eternal abode of Truth, and fulfils all our desires." Let us therefore worship Truth in silence ; let us not be followers of error ; let us continually struggle for the realization of Truth.

WHAT IS VEDANTA ?

MANY people have the erroneous idea that by Vedanta Philosophy is meant a philosophy confined exclusively to the Vedas, or Sacred Scriptures of India ; but the term Veda in the present case is used to signify, not a book, but "wisdom," while "anta" means "end." Vedanta, therefore, implies literally "end of wisdom" ; and the philosophy is called Vedanta because it explains what that *end* is and how it can be attained. All relative knowledge ends in the realization of the unity of the individual soul with the ultimate Truth of the universe. That ultimate reality is the universal Spirit. It is the infinite ocean of wisdom. As rivers running across thousands of miles ultimately end in the ocean, so the rivers of relative knowledge, flowing through the various stages of the phenomenal universe, ultimately end in the infinite ocean of existence, intelligence, bliss, and love.

To realize this unity must be the aim of all true religion, but the religious history of the world shows that no other nation has ever at any period understood it so clearly, or preached it so boldly, as did the sages among the ancient Aryans who inhabited India. For nearly five thousand years, indeed, India has held in her bosom the sublime idea that "Truth is one, but the means of attaining it are many." In the Rig-Veda, the most

ancient of all known scriptures, we read, "That which exists is one, men call it by various names." The Jews call it Jehovah ; the Christians, God or Father in Heaven ; the Mohammedans worship it as Allah ; the Buddhists, as Buddha ; the Jains, as Jaina ; while the Hindus call it Brahman.

Upon this fundamental Truth rests the whole structure of Vedanta teaching ; and students of comparative religions are coming to recognize that because, more than any other religion or philosophy of the world, it insists upon this doctrine of the unity of existence under a variety of names, it offers, as can no other, an adequate foundation for all the different phases of dualistic, qualified non-dualistic, and monistic systems of religious thought. Vedanta, indeed, may be said to establish a universal religion, which embraces all the special religions of the world.

This uniquely universal character, moreover, is still further emphasized by the fact that it is not built round any particular personality. Any religion or philosophy that depends for its authority on a specific personality can never satisfy the demands of a universal religion. In order to make a system of philosophy or religion universal, the first thing necessary is that it be absolutely impersonal. So long as there is a founder of a religion, so long is it limited by the personality of the founder, and cannot be universal, as we find in special religions like Christianity, Mohammed-

danism, Buddhism, and kindred faiths. The followers of each of these great religions, forgetting the principles, become attached to the personality of the founder and refuse to recognize any other ; and this results in the discord, conflict, and persecution with which the pages of religious history are filled.

x The system of Vedanta has many phases. The dualistic phase includes the fundamental principles of all the dualistic or monotheistic systems, such as Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and all systems that advocate the worship of the personal God, or devotion to any divine ideal.

x The qualified non-dualistic phase embraces all the systems which teach the immanency and transcendency of God. It includes all such ideas as " God dwells in us as well as in the universe " ; " We live and move and have our being in God " ; " He is the soul of our souls " ; " We are parts of one stupendous whole " ; " We are the sons of God, the children of Immortal bliss, " etc. But the monistic phase of Vedanta is the most sublime of all. Very few thinkers can appreciate the grandeur of spiritual oneness. Yet herein lies the solution of the deepest problems of science, philosophy and metaphysics, and the final goal of all religions. It alone explains how it is possible for one to say, " I and my Father are one. "

Vedanta is a system of religion as well as a system of philosophy. There are, it is true, many systems of

philosophy in Greece and Germany, but none of them has succeeded in harmonizing itself with the religious ideals of the human mind ; or has shown the path by which man may attain to God-consciousness and emancipation from the bondages of ignorance, selfishness, and all other imperfections, in so rational a way as has the Vedanta philosophy in India. It does not ask anybody to accept or believe anything which does not appeal to reason, or which is not in harmony with the laws of science, philosophy, and logic. But in India, it must be remembered, religion has never been separated from science, logic, or philosophy. As a consequence, Vedanta, ancient as it is, is none the less in strict accord with the ultimate conclusions of modern science, preaches the doctrine of evolution, and still has room left for all truths which may be discovered in future.

Another notable feature of Vadanta is that it does not prescribe to all one special path by which to reach the ultimate goal of every religion. On the contrary, it recognizes the varying tendencies of different minds, and guides each along the way best suited to it. It classifies human tendencies into four grand divisions, which, together with their subdivisions, cover almost all classes of people ; and then it sets forth the methods which may be helpful to every one. Each of these methods is called in Sanskrit " Yoga. "

First is Karma Yoga. It is for the active man, for those who like to work and are always ready to

do something for the help of others : in short, it is for the busy, every day working man or woman. Karma Yoga teaches the secret of work, and tells us how we can turn our daily tasks into acts of worship, and thus reach perfection in this life through work, and work alone. It is essentially practical and absolutely necessary for those who prefer an active career, for it will teach them how to accomplish a maximum of labor with a minimum loss of energy. The larger part of the mental energy of the majority of people in this country is needlessly wasted by the constant rush of their daily lives, which is merely the result of lack of self-control. Did they know the secret of work they would not only avoid this waste, which is the cause of the many nervous disorders to which they are at present subject, but would actually lengthen their days. Karma Yoga reveals this secret, and opens the way to complete self-mastery.

The next method is Bhakti Yoga. It is for such as are of an emotional nature. It teaches how ordinary emotions can bring forth spiritual unfoldment of the highest kind and lead to the realization of the ultimate ideal of all religions. In a word, it is the path of devotion and love. It explains the nature of divine love and shows us how to turn human love into divine, and thus fulfil the purpose of life both here and hereafter.

The third is Raja Yoga—the path of concentration and meditation. The field of Raja Yoga is very vast. It covers the whole psychic plane and describes the pro-

cesses by which the psychic powers are developed, such as thought-reading, clairvoyance, clairsaudience, the evolving of finer perceptions, the going out of the body, the curing of disease through mental power, and the performing of all such acts as are ordinarily called miracles. All the psychic powers which were displayed by Jesus of Nazareth and his followers, and which are used to-day by Christian Scientists, mental healers, faith healers, divine healers, and the various other kinds of healers, have been displayed from ancient times by the Yogis in India.

Raja Yoga takes these psychic powers and phenomena, classifies them and makes a science out of them. It also teaches the science of breathing. The wonderful effects of breathing exercises on mind and body are not unknown to the mental healers of the West. If, however, Raja Yoga deals scientifically with the psychic powers, it does not cease to warn its students that the attainment of any of these powers is not a sign of spirituality. This is a great lesson which the mental healers and Christian Scientists of this country especially, will have to learn from the Yogis of India. Little brains and weak intellects easily turn away from the path of spiritual truth when some psychic power begins to manifest itself ; and they think that they have reached the highest state of spirituality because they have the power to cure headache or heartache. Raja Yoga, however, teaches that the exercise of psychic power and the making a profession

of it are great obstacles in the path of spiritual advancement. Its principal aim, on the contrary, is to lead the student, through concentration and meditation, to the highest state of super-consciousness, where the individual soul communes with the universal Spirit and realizes the unity of existence, eternal peace, and happiness.

Jnana Yoga is the fourth method. It is the path of right knowledge and discrimination. This is for those who are intellectual, discriminative, and of a philosophical nature. Thus we can see in some slight degree how universal is the scope of Vedanta. It also explains the fundamental principles of spiritualism ; tells us how the soul exists after death and under what conditions ; what kind of souls can communicate with us, and what becomes of them afterwards ; how the earth-bound souls, being subject to the law of Karma or Causation, reincarnate on this earth, taking human form again and again. It explains the science of the soul ; and it expounded the law of correspondences ages before Swedenborg was born.

The religion of Vedanta accepts the teachings of all the great spiritual teachers of the world, recognizes them as Incarnations of Divine Spirit, and leaves room for those who are yet to come for the good of humanity.

Vedanta explains the basis of ethics. Why should we be moral ? Not because some one has said this or that ; not because it is written in a certain chapter of a

certain scripture, but because of the spiritual oneness of the universe. If you injure another, you injure yourself. If you are wicked, you not only do harm to yourself but also to others. It also explains through this spiritual oneness why we should love our neighbor as ourself, because in spirit we are already one with that neighbor.

The ethics of Vedanta bring peace and harmony to the religious world. Wherever Vedanta reigns, religious toleration and co-operation among all sects prevail, and religious persecution ceases forever.

A student of Vedanta does not belong to any sect, creed, or denomination. He is neither a Christian, nor a Mohammedan, nor a Buddhist, nor a Jain, nor a Hindu ; yet in principles he is one with all. He can go to a church or a mosque or a temple. He is a follower of that nameless and formless Eternal Religion, which underlies all the special religions of the world ; and as he grows into a deeper and deeper understanding of this universal religion, he cannot but declare, as did Professor Max Muller, "Vedanta has room for almost every religion ; nay, it embraces them all." And so it must, because its whole teaching is based on those all-inclusive words of the Blessed Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita :

"Whosoever comes to me through whatsoever path, I reach him ; all men are struggling in the paths which ultimately lead to me, the Eternal Truth."

COSMIC EVOLUTION AND ITS PURPOSE.

"The evolution of the cosmos begins when I reflect My intelligence on the eternal energy."—*Bhagavad Gita*, xiv., 3.

"The attainment of the Imperishable One is the highest goal of evolution. Having realized this, the wise return not to the world, but enjoy eternal life in My Supreme Abode,"—*Bhagavad Gita*, viii., 21.

All the scriptures of the world bear testimony to the fact that from very ancient times various attempts have been made by human minds to understand the laws that govern the phenomena of the universe, and to explain the processes which nature adopts in producing these phenomena. The Old Testament, the Zendavesta and the Vedas, are the scriptures which record such attempts made by the thinkers amongst three great nations, the Hebrews, the Parsees or Iranians, and the Hindus or the Aryans. Chronologically speaking, the Vedas are the oldest of the three. The Old Testament and the Zendavesta, believing in the extracosmic personal God, describe the special creation of the universe out of nothing at a definite time. We are all familiar with the legendary account of creation given in Genesis. The Lord finished the creation of the world in six days, gave it the sun, moon and stars, "the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night," and He clothed the earth with verdure, grass, herbs, trees,

peopled it with all kinds of animals, breathed life into man's nostrils and gave all to him, who was the crowning glory of creation. In the Zendavesta we find a similar account of the special creation of the universe by the extra-cosmic personal God, Ahura-Mazda. But we search in vain for any such account of creation in the Vedas, the most ancient scriptural writings of the Aryans who inhabited India. Those who have studied carefully the monumental works and voluminous writings of the Rishis or seers of Truth in ancient India are quite amazed in not finding anywhere an account of the special creation of the universe out of nothing.

The poetic and truth-seeking minds of the Vedic sages soared high above the clouds of ignorance and superstition in the infinite space of eternal Truth, when they asked and answered such questions as "Who has seen the First-born? Where was the life, the blood and the soul of the universe? Who can declare whence this creation? The Gods (Devas) cannot, as they came later. Who can know what its source is and whether created or not?"—Rig Veda, x, 129 Hymn. Those questions were not an outcome of uncultivated minds. They were not the results of ignorant and superstitious minds which cannot grasp ideas and conceptions of God higher than a block of stone or wood. How many people of to-day ask such questions, and how many can solve such problems? Can a mind which believes in the multiplicity of gods as the highest ideal ask "Who can

declare whence this creation? The gods cannot, because they came later." Can an idolatrous person who bows down with awe and reverence before an idol and worships it as the God of the universe ask such a question as "Who knows whether this universe was created or not? He who rules it in the highest heavens knows, or perhaps He knows not." These questions were asked by the Vedic sages who lived in prehistoric times, when the other nations were in their infancy, when reading and writing were unknown to all, when schools and colleges of the present day were not thought of, and the various instruments which we find to-day in the laboratory of a scientist and consider as an indispensable means for acquiring knowledge, were never dreamed of. These doubts were raised at an age when education consisted in the sudden flashes of light that came spontaneously in simple and truthseeking minds. At such a time the ancient thinkers in India asked these questions. Did they answer them? In one of the hymns of the Rig Veda, which dates back perhaps 5,000 years before Christ, we find the answers to these questions. It is said—"Before the manifestation of the phenomenal universe there was neither non-entity nor entity, neither atmosphere nor sky beyond. Death was not, nor, therefore, immortality; nor day and night. That One breathless by itself in essence. There was nothing different from it nor beyond it. From this germ burst forth mighty productive powers, nature below and

energy above.”—Rig Veda, x, Hymn 129. Again, elsewhere in the Upanishads it is said—“From this undifferentiated Absolute Being evolved gradually vital force, mind and all the sense-powers, ether, heat, and all that is gaseous, liquid and solid.”—Mundaka Upanishad II, 1, 3. It is indeed startling to scholars to find that in such an ancient age the thinkers and philosophers in India discovered that mind, thought, intellect, ether are the results of the evolution of one undifferentiated causal energy. In another Upanishad it is said—“The whole universe, before the evolution of name and form began, remained potentially in that unmanifested causal state.” This causal energy is called by various names by different philosophers, such as Avyaktam, Prakriti or Maya, the meaning being the undifferentiated causal energy.

As regards the process of the cosmic evolution of the phenomenal universe, we find such descriptions as “From the undifferentiated primordial energy evolved ether.” Then the ethereal particles or atoms began to vibrate; that vibratory state of the ethereal ocean is described as Vayu, or that which vibrates, or moves or blows. It is the state of extreme heat caused by attraction and aggregation of matter. On account of high temperature it is sometimes described as the gaseous state of the material world. Therefore, the production of heat, in Sanskrit Agni, Latin Ignis, is described as the third stage of the cosmic evolution. When

that extreme heat begins to radiate and the ocean of gaseous matter cools off, the gaseous condition is changed into liquid; in Sanskrit it is called Apah, which means liquid. The liquid state being further cooled off by the radiation of heat into space, the particles of matter appear in the form of a solid mass which is called in Sanskrit Prithivi or solid. Thus, when the solid mass is yet more cooled off, the germs of life begin to manifest on the physical plane, first in the form of vegetables, then as animals, and lastly, as man.*

This is the first description of the principal stages of cosmic evolution that we find in the Vedic literature. It is the corner-stone upon which the huge superstructure of the doctrine of evolution was built through the rigorous processes of science and logic by later philosophers. Amongst the six principal schools of philosophy in India the Sankhya system of Kapila is devoted entirely to the systematic, logical and scientific explanation of the process of cosmic evolution. Kapila is supposed by Oriental scholars to have lived as early as the seventh century B. C. He may be called the father of the evolution theory in India. His cosmology spread far and wide all over India, and those who came in contact with the ancient Aryans were more or less influenced by it. There is no ancient philosophy in the western world which is not indebted to the Sankhya system of Kapila. The

* See Taittiriya Upanishad II. I.

idea of evolution which the ancient Greek philosophers and the Neo-Platonists had can be traced back to the influence of this Sankhya school of philosophy. Prof. E. W. Hopkins says in his *Religions of India*: "Plato is full of Sankhyan thought, worked out by him, but taken from Pythagoras. Before the sixth century B. C. all the religious-philosophical ideas of Pythagoras are current in India (L. von Schroeder, *Pythagoras*). If there were but one or two of these cases they might be set aside as accidental coincidences, but such coincidences are too numerous to be the result of chance." p. 559. Again, he says, "Neo-Platonism and Christian Gnosticism owe much to India. The Gnostic ideas in regard to a plurality of heavens and spiritual worlds go back directly to Hindu sources. Soul and light are one in the Sankhya system, before they become so in Greece, and when they appear united in Greece it is by means of the thought which is borrowed from India. The famous three qualities of the Sankhya reappear as the Gnostic 'three classes.' " p. 560. In regard to Neo-Platonism Prof. Garbe says: "The views of Plotinus are in perfect agreement with those of the Sankhya system. Porphyry, the disciple of Plotinus, has the Yoga doctrine of immediate perception of truth leading to union with the deity. As is well known and undisputed, this Porphyry copies directly from the treatise of Bardesanes, which contains an account of the Brahmins, while in many instances he simply repeats the facts

of the Sankhya philosophy." "The Religions of India." p. 561. It is said and generally believed that Pythagoras came to India and learned the principles of this philosophy, and afterwards promulgated it in Greece and Alexandria. Greek legend is full of Samian's travels to Egypt, Chaldea, Phoenicia and India. Prof. Hopkins says: "After a careful review of the points of contact and weighing as dispassionately as possible the historical evidence for and against the originality of Pythagoras, we are unable to come to any other conclusion than that the Greek philosopher took his whole system indirectly from India." p. 559.

In this Sankhya system it is most startling to find that its ultimate conclusions harmonize and coincide with those of modern science. It says: First, Something cannot come out of nothing. Secondly, the effect lies in the cause, that is, the effect is the cause reproduced, or in other words, cause is the potential or unmanifested state, and when it is manifested it is called effect. Thirdly destruction means the reversion of an effect to its causal state. Until lately this truth was denied by many of the Western scientists. Fourthly, the laws of nature are uniform and regular throughout. That which is in the microcosm is also in the macrocosm. Fifthly, the building up of the cosmos is the result of the evolution of the cosmic energy, called Prakriti. These are some of the principal conclusions which Kapila arrived at through observation, experiment and following strictly the rules of

inductive logic. Kapila understood the law of attraction and repulsion when he described the famous aphorism, which means "the appearance of phenomena is due to the process of Râga or attraction, and Virâga or repulsion." According to Kapila, Prakriti or the undifferentiated causal energy, is uncreated and eternal, but insentient. It is the state of equilibrium of all forces which are correlated to one another, and are its expressions. Here we find the first idea of the correlation of forces which manifest in the subjective and objective world. In that state there is no creation, no phenomena. When the balance of these forces is disturbed then begins the process of evolution. This process continues for millions of years, and afterwards begins the cosmic involution or dissolution. The process of involution is only the reverse process of evolution. Evolution is followed by involution, and involution is again followed by evolution. The chain of evolution, involution, and again evolution, is a Circle. It is beginningless and endless. The period of cosmic evolution is called in Sanskrit a kalpa, or a cycle, and the period of involution is another cycle. At the end of one cycle of cosmic dissolution the phenomenal world returns to its causal state. Kapila describes how and through what power the state of equilibrium of Prakriti is disturbed, how spiritual influx of Purusha or the absolute spirit illumines Prakriti and generates the activity to evolve. He then describes how Prakriti being illuminated by Spirit evolves first into cosmic

Intelligence, then into the cosmic Ego. This is the state when subject and object are differentiated. The first stage of the evolution of the cosmic energy into the objective phenomena is Akasa, ether. Modern scientists are not quite sure regarding the state prior to ether. When the ethereal particles begin to vibrate and move the result is light, heat, and the gaseous state of matter, then gradually liquid and solid ; first the subtle forms, atoms and molecules (Tanmâtrâs in Sanskrit), and then the gross elements. Out of these subtle particles of matter, says Kapila, have evolved mind or internal organ, sense-organs and the sense instruments of organic animals. Starting from the gross elements, Kapila analyzes the objects of perception, and says that every gross object is composed of a combination of finer forms of matter—that is, molecules and atoms ; he traces the atoms back to their causal state of Prakriti or eternal energy, and calls them force centers. Thus we see that about the seventh century B. C. the great thinkers in India discovered the same truth which modern scientists have recently discovered. If we examine the theories of the evolution of the cosmos according to modern evolutionists and astronomers, we find that they have arrived at similar conclusions. Professor W. Le Conte Stevens says that if we accept the nebular hypothesis then we can understand that the evolution of the earth and other planets has taken place through ages from the primordial nebulous matter diffused in space at a

temperature as low as that now pervading interplanetary space, several hundred degrees lower than that of our coldest winter weather. In this ocean of nebulous matter "If a single point is denser than the surrounding matter, then it becomes the center of attraction.* The aggregation of matter involves the arrest of motion—for particles moving toward the center are there stopped, but their energy is not destroyed. Mass motion is changed into that motion of molecules which is manifested as temperature.

"The greater the aggregation, the higher is the resulting temperature. Radiation also begins as soon as temperature is raised, but the rates of increase and loss of heat are not necessarily the same. The ill-defined mass of gas would gradually become viscous, until a condition of solidity would be reached, most probably at the center. We have thus great central density with intense heat; around this the solid passes by insensible gradations into a viscous, tarry envelope, almost equally hot; this in turn as we pass outward becomes less viscous, until a condition is reached like the average of what we now call liquids; but differing in this respect that at first there is no well-defined boundary between it and the densely gaseous materials which surround it."† As the temperature falls by the radiation of heat,

* This reminds one of the Sankhya theory that evolution begins when the balance of the properties of matter is disturbed on account of the unequal density in some part of the Prakriti.

† See "Evolution of the Earth," by Dr. Lewis G. Janes; p. 105.

the gaseous state changes into liquid. Through the loss of heat and chemical association liquid gradually changes into solid. Thus we see how closely Professor Stevens' theory coincides with the theory of evolution as described by the Hindu philosophers. These ancient evolutionists in India applied the doctrine of evolution to every phenomenon, and explained how, from a minute germ of life, a human being is evolved. They understood that the difference between man and lower animals is only one of degree, and not of kind. They said that each germ of life is indestructible, like matter and force, and before it appears as a man it passes through all the various stages of evolution of the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdom. It is for this reason Hindus object to the killing of animals for food or pleasure. The Hindu evolutionists differ from the modern scientists in their belief in the continuity of each germ of life from lower to higher. But the tendency of modern science is to find out whether the continuity of the germ of life is a fact. Thus having explained the process of the cosmic evolution, they wanted to know whether or not the process of evolution has any purpose behind it. Before referring to the answer which the philosophers in India gave to that question, let us see whether a similar problem has arisen in the minds of modern evolutionists, and what they say about it. It is a question of vital importance. On the solution of this problem depends the explanation

of the purpose of our earthly existence, and the foundation of ethics and religion. If we are mere freaks of nature and have come into existence by chance or accident, then there is no necessity for acquiring knowledge, and there is no need of ethical or religious life. There is no utility in virtue. If we are led by the blind forces of environments to struggle for our bare existence, which at the highest can last only a few score years, why should not we destroy everything, if by so doing we can live comfortably and obtain pleasure and happiness ? If there be no purpose behind the process of evolution why is there so much variety in the manifestations ? Why should there be any such thing as evolution in the cosmic process of phenomena ? An agnostic will answer by saying, I do not know. Can a real seeker of Truth be contented with such an answer and enjoy life like an ignorant child ? Under the present conditions of our mind and understanding we do not know many things ; shall we therefore deny the existence of such objects ? If we ask a child about the law of gravitation, it will answer, I do not know. Will anybody take it for granted that there is no such thing as the law of gravitation because the child does not know it or understand it ? Certainly not. If we ask an uncultivated man or an orthodox believer in the creation story of Genesis whether he understands or believes in the cosmic process of evolution, he will answer, no. Will it not be simply an expression of his ignorance ? Similarly

if an agnostic says, I do not know whether there is any purpose at the back of the comic evolution, we shall place him on the same level with an ignorant child, or with an uncultivated orthodox believer in a dogma. He may be cultivated in many ways, but as regards our problem he is no more than a child in search after Truth.

Leaving the unsatisfactory answers of agnostics, let us see what the best thinkers of the present day say about the purpose of evolution. Most of the modern evolutionists believe that the struggle for existence, natural selection and the survival of the fittest are the principal agencies in the process of evolution. John Fiske, one of the foremost evolutionists that America has produced, says : " In the cosmic process of evolution, whereof our individual lives are part and parcel, there are other agencies at work besides natural selection, and the story of the struggle for existence is far from being the whole story." " I think it can be shown that the principles of morality have their roots in the deepest foundations of the universe, that the cosmic process is ethical in the profoundest sense."* " Again," † he says, " the ethical process is not only part and parcel of the cosmic process, but it is its crown and consummation. Toward the spiritual perfection of Humanity the stupendous momentum of the cosmic process has all along been tending. That spiritual perfection is the true goal of evolution, the divine end that

* " Through Nature to God " by John Fiske ; pp. 79, 80.

† *Ibid* ; p. 113.

was involved in the beginning. When Huxley asks us to believe that 'the cosmic process has no sort of relation to moral ends,' I feel like replying with the question, 'Does not the cosmic process exist purely for the sake of moral ends?' Subtract from the universe its ethical meaning, and nothing remains but an unreal phantom, the figment of false metaphysics." Thus we see that the ultimate goal and purpose of evolution, according to John Fiske, is the perfection of the ethical and spiritual nature of man. What does this writer mean by spiritual perfection? He says, "The ultimate goal of the ethical process is the perfecting of human character." p. 114. Again, he says, "Thus while the earth Spirit goes on, unhasting, yet unresting, weaving in the loom of Time the visible garment of God, we begin to see that even what look like failures and blemishes have been from the outset involved in that accomplishment of the all wise and all holy purpose, the perfection of the spiritual man in the likeness of his Heavenly Father." p. 115.

Now let us see what the Hindu philosophers say regarding the purpose of evolution. According to them the purpose of the cosmic evolution of Prakriti is the final liberation of Purusha or the Real Spirit of man from the bondages of ignorance, imperfection and selfishness, and the attainment of perfect freedom, which is another word for perfection. As long as we are bound by certain conditions, whether mental or physical, we are not free.

If we study closely the process of evolution we find that there is an expression of this purpose in the evolution of the animal form. It attains to perfection on this earth under present conditions when the human form is produced. The evolution of the animal form fulfills its purpose when it reaches the human form. There cannot be any form higher than human on this earth under existing environments. If conditions change human form will also change. If the temperature of the earth be higher or lower than it now is, it will be impossible for human beings to live ; but some other animals, suited for that higher or lower temperature, will be able to exist. We need a particular kind of temperature for our existence, in which the human form can thrive. Nature produces the environmental conditions first, and then brings out the invisible germs of life, and gives them suitable forms so that each one will manifest the powers which are latent in it. In animals we do not find expressions of that moral power, spiritual power, which the human organism is alone fitted to express. Human form and organism is the only one suitable for the manifestation of higher love, self-sacrifice and self-control. The animal nature can be controlled by man alone. If the human body be the perfection of animal form, and if the laws of nature be uniform, can we not say perfection is the goal of evolution ? Has not the evolution of animal form stopped after producing human form ? The purpose of the evolution of form is fulfilled by the

production of the perfected organism of man, the highest of the animal kingdom. The germ of life has had to struggle hard in order to manifest as a human being. This has been described in the very common saying in Sanskrit : "It is extremely hard for lower animals to be born as a human being", because nature takes a long time in evolving the higher and most complicated organism of man. Man alone is entitled to be called an ethical or moral or spiritual animal. From the animal plane we are rising through the moral into the spiritual plane. The animal plane is that of a narrow and limited consciousness of the lower self—where the animal identifies himself with his body and thinks of himself as exclusive of others. From the animal plane we are evolving through moral into the spiritual plane. The less the expression of lower self there is, the higher we rise above the animal plane. When we recognize the self of others, seek their comfort and help them, then we are on the plane called human. This is the beginning of moral life. Then we recognize the rights of others as we do our own. This is expressed by the golden rule, "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you." The best expression of this moral law we find in the saying of Jesus the Christ : "Love thy neighbor as thyself." When we begin to love others as we love our own Self we are truly ethical. Then we do not think that we have fulfilled the highest end and aim of life by eating, drink-

ing and begetting children like lower animals, but that the fulfillment of the purpose of life consists in loving others as we love our own Self. Then we obtain true freedom from the bondage of selfishness. That freedom can be acquired through a higher form of love of the real Self of others. Again, that real unselfish love is possible when we realize our True nature, and, therefore, it depends upon knowledge of our True nature. Each individual soul, according to the Hindu philosophers, is bound to become perfect, free and unselfish. The soul then reaches the plane of spirituality. A man may be moral without being spiritual, but a spiritual man can never be immoral. Some people say moral life is not necessary for spirituality. They are mistaken. They, perhaps, mean by spirituality something different from what the great spiritual teachers of the world meant. Spirituality consists in the perfection of morality. So each individual soul must attain moral perfection before it is called spiritual. The Hindu philosophers do not believe that one should be moral for fear of eternal punishment, but through the natural process of evolution. When spirituality is perfectly acquired, the soul realizes its divine nature and manifests divinity at every moment of its earthly existence. Then, and then alone, the purpose of evolution is fulfilled. We are all bound to reach that stage of spiritual perfection which is the ultimate goal of evolution. Therefore, it is said in the Bhagavad Gita : "He who

realizes his divine nature conquers all the stages of evolution, acquires all happiness which can be obtained in the highest heaven, becomes free from all imperfections and enjoys eternal bliss in this life."

UNITY AND HARMONY

"That which exists is one ; men call it by various names,"—
Rig Veda.

The whole teaching of Vedanta stands for one thing—that is love. Five hundred years before the advent of Jesus the Christ, Buddha taught "Hatred is never cured by hatred, but by Love. This is the everlasting ethical Law." And what is love ? Love means expression of oneness. Jesus, the Christ, said, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." But He did not explain why we should love our neighbors as ourselves. The explanation you will find in the Vedas, in the Vedanta Philosophy, in the Upanishads. The Upanishads, which are the earliest writings of this universal philosophy, teach that we should love our neighbors as ourselves, not because they have done us some good or been kind to us, but even if they have spoken unkind words, even if they have taken wicked steps against us, even if they are spiteful and jealous of us, still we should love them because we are one with our neighbors in spirit. There is only one Spirit. The apparent man seems to be different and separated from that universal Spirit, which we regard as the Absolute, the Infinite Being, the Brahman. This Universal Spirit is abiding in us all. We are like so many mirrors which hold the image of Divinity which is universal and one.

I will give you an illustration : suppose you hold in the sunlight hundreds of small teacups, and let the self-
 effulgent sun, this luminous heavenly body, be reflected in the water that they contain. In each cup you will see an image of the sun, of the same nature, brilliant, luminous, but very small. Think of the immensity of the sun compared with the earth. The diameter of the earth is eight thousand miles, and the diameter of the sun is eight hundred and eighty thousand miles. And this vast luminous body is reflected in a teacup ! There is the reflection, perfect. Compared to the sun, the earth is like a geometrical point which has no parts and no magnitude ; or, in other words, the surface of the earth is the same as the center—no diameter at all. Now, if this earth, with all its volume and mass, be considered as a geometrical point, then where are we ? We are like grains of sand, even smaller, when we compare our physical bodies with the universe. Yet in these infinitesimally small particles of human bodies we find the reflection of the divine and self-effulgent Sun of the universe. That is the image of God in man. But, as the image of the Sun cannot exist independent of the Sun, so the human soul, which is the image of Divinity, cannot exist, even for a second, independent of the Divine Sun, the Divine Being, whose reflection it is. We are all one in that infinite Being, the Supreme Spirit, God, the Absolute, the Brahman, the Heavenly Father, the Divine Mother. The names vary, but the ideal is one. In the

Rig Veda, the oldest Scripture in the world, we read : " That which exists is one ; men call it by various names." And standing at that point of oneness, we should renounce everything that makes us feel as separate individuals, as independent of each other, as differentiated from each other. We should try to combine them all into that one harmonious whole. God is one stupendous whole of which we are but parts. And that is the truth.

Again we read elsewhere :—A seeker after Truth once asked his Spiritual Teacher : Revered Master, please tell me in a few words the whole truth of Vedanta. The Master replied : In half a verse I will tell you that which has been told in thousands of volumes : " Brahman (God) is Truth, the world is unreal, and the individual Soul is one with Brahman." This oneness is the quintessence of Vedanta. Starting from oneness, we should go on destroying all ideas of separateness, variation or differentiation, which are only upon the surface. The undercurrent of the whole universe is One. And if we cannot see that undercurrent, what is the use of studying Vedanta or any other philosophy or religion : We do not regard him as a student of Vedanta, who does not see that oneness underlying all the variety of manifestations, because that is the fundamental principle of this philosophy.

Now if you start from that point, where is disharmony ? How can there be war ? How can there be any jealousy or hatred ? There should be nothing but

peace, not only in our hearts, but among our brethren, among all students, among men and women of the whole world—nay, in all living creatures. That is the ideal. There cannot be any distinction, when we see God as the Supreme Being in whom we live and move and have our being in actual reality. There cannot be disharmony, but there will be eternal peace and happiness.

Vedanta was introduced into this country to prove to the world that the fundamental ideal and the ultimate goal of all religions are in that Oneness. If we study the evolution of this world, what do we find? By “evolution” we mean the expression or change from one homogeneous mass into a heterogeneous variety. Now we are heterogeneous; there are men and women, lower animals, plants, and again different nations, nationalities, castes, creeds, denominations.—This is variety, but all this has come from one source. Why should we not realize that one source, and in it find harmony? But if we see only the surface, we can never find harmony. If we try to make our faces look alike, we shall destroy our faces. There will be no face left. But that is not the plan of nature. On the contrary the plan of nature is unity in variety, and we cannot work against it. We must learn to be natural, to be in perfect harmony with natural law. Let nature do her work. We must not resist her force. Nature is trying to harmonize everything, to combine all forces and show the beauty and grandeur of oneness. Nature is evolving to manifest that onenes

in the end, and spirituality means the climax of natural evolution. In the end, we find the truth that was told by Jesus, the Christ : " I and My Father are One." So, that oneness between the son and the heavenly Father is the goal.

But shall we stop there? Shall we merely see our individual oneness with the universal Being ? No. We shall also see our oneness with all beings, whether they are of the same belief or not. Our personal differences of opinion we must learn to sacrifice for the sake of the cause. The cause is oneness. If you are practicing renunciation, renounce your personal opinions. The self-conceit of the mind which is struggling for spiritual upliftment is the cause of great degradation. We must guard against it. We must learn to be humble. Humility is the first virtue. Learn to see goodness in others. Learn to find your own faults. Do not be elated. Do not think you are greater than others, lest you sow the seed of your own downfall. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." We have no right to judge. Vedanta tells us that if you have chosen one particular path that is good for you, you have no right to tell others that they should not follow the path which is good for them, Be just. And that is the spirit which was taught in this age by Sri Ramakrishna, that all religions are like so many paths which lead to the same goal. We do not come to destroy anything, but we come to harmonize everything, so that there shall be no more discord, but peace and

harmony everywhere.

And if there be any disagreement among us, we must study our own feelings, and learn to renounce the cause of that disagreement, which is in ourselves, not outside. We should renounce that; be free from it. Then we shall see harmony. We are the cause of our troubles, and we blame somebody else. But we should be brave enough to take the whole blame upon our own shoulders. And that is what Vedanta teaches. If there be any discord, you are the cause of it. Do not blame anyone else. And you can unmake what you have made. We are the creators of our own future. We are the makers of our own destiny. By our thoughts and deeds we are creating all the time. We are creators in miniature, because we are parts of the infinite Creator. We are building every minute. Do you not see how we are taking in new particles of matter in the form of food and drink, how the old forms are eliminated, and we manufacture new molecules, new atoms, new cells, new tissues every moment ?

Do you not see that you create your own environments wherever you go ? Who is the cause of your troubles ? Who is the cause of your happiness and pleasure and the misfortunes and sufferings that you go through ? There is no other devil or creature outside of our own minds. We are the causes. Vedanta has given this as a death blow to the dualistic theory that there are two creatures, (the one of good and the other

of evil), sitting on the clouds and, according to their whims, forcing the children of Infinite Being to do right and wrong. That is not the ideal. Everything is governed by law. These laws are as eternal as God Himself. His laws are manifested in nature, and we are here to study them, to realize the beauty, the grandeur and the wonderful spiritual powers that are latent in each individual soul.

And if we cannot realize this, what have we learned in all these years ? Anyone can fuss and fight. But if anyone smites you on the right cheek, turn the left, and show your love and humility. And then you will be the salt of the earth. Then you will be fishers of men. If you cannot put yourself on the lowest plane of humanity, how can you serve humanity ? It is self-conceit that causes our bondage. The life of the *Sannyasin* means that you have renounced everything. What is everything ? Your attachment. You may live in a palace, you may have all the pleasures of life around you, and if you have no attachment then you are a *Sannyasin*. But if you walk like a beggar in the street, if you sleep on the grass under a tree, and if your mind is hankering after wealth and all the pleasures of the senses, you are a beggar and not a *Sannyasin*. So, if you have not control of your mind, you have not learned the a-b-c of Vedanta. Think of the great king Janaka, who was an emperor in India and the greatest teacher of Vedanta. He lived in a palace, but unattached, doing all the works of em-

peror, of prime minister, of general, of father and husband ; but yet, when the palace caught fire he said, " If the whole kingdom is destroyed, it does not hurt me. It does not impoverish me, or make me feel poor."

Do you not see that you cannot enrich the soul by earthly possessions, nor can you impoverish your spirit by renunciation, but it is the attachment to material conditions that holds the soul down on this lowest plane.

Vedanta tells us that we must not separate God from the world, but we must learn how to harmonize God and the world ; not to see God and think of Him as beyond nature as we have been taught in the orthodox churches, but to bring God into our midst, to realize that every kind of work, whether manual labor or intellectual or spiritual work, is an act of worship. When you scrub the floor, remember that you are worshipping the Lord ; let every expression of your energy be an offering to the Supreme. That is the ideal. Then there will be no more cause for fear. The greatest devil that ever existed is fear,—fear of death, fear of punishment. It is ingrown, inborn with us. We have almost inherited it because we have learned it from childhood. Even the prenatal condition of the mother has inoculated the child with that germ of fear. For that reason we have fear of death, fear of punishment, fear of eternal hell. We think we are born in sin and iniquity. But we are not born in iniquity. Sins are nothing but errors, mistakes. All such mistakes, as well as fear, arise from ignorance which

veils the true nature of our soul and the harmony that exists between God and the universe. Being overcome by the delusive power of this ignorance, one commits wicked acts and becomes a sinner. The darkness of ignorance which creates the phantom of a devil and which is the mother of superstition can be dispelled by the light of true knowledge and divine wisdom which dawns upon the soul of a sincere student of Vedanta.

Vedanta gives the best commentary on the true religion of Christ—not churchianity. In the true religion of Christ there is perfect harmony : and this interpretation we need today. The whole world needs it. In a few years you will see that Vedanta is going to be the religion of the world. Theosophy, Christian Science, New Thought are all stepping-stones. Vedanta is the highest goal. They are all going towards it. You may not appreciate what Vedanta is today, because you are so few. But how many believed in Christ ? Only twelve disciples. Out of those twelve, many denied Him ; one betrayed Him. What Christianity has not done in two thousand years, Vedanta will do in two hundred. Just wait, and during your lifetime you will see that the seed that has been sown will grow everywhere. Souls are hungry to receive this truth. I have come from Los Angeles where four or five hundred people were clamoring for me to give more lectures. They were begging me to come and stay there and make my home in California. Wherever I go I find these hungry souls. They are not satisfied

with Christian Science, New Thought, and other cults. We stand beyond all cult limitations, although there is truth in all these teachings. I can prove that Mrs. Eddy took her principles from Vedanta. Read my lecture on Christian Science and you will find it explained there. The fundamental principles of Theosophy were taken from Vedanta. I gave a lecture in the New Thought Church in Los Angeles, and I told them how the fundamental principles of New Thought are to be found in Vedanta. I was one of the speakers in the New Thought Convention in Detroit. I was one of the speakers at the State Spiritualist's Convention at Hartford last year. I lectured in Indiana at Chesterfield before eight thousand people, also in Lilydale. So I know them all, and there is some truth in each. Without doubt they are all trying to help toward the evolution of the spiritual ideals of the nation, but Vedanta is on the top round of the ladder. Yet its different phases embrace them all. Vedanta has a dualistic phase, a qualified nondualistic phase, and a monistic phase, with innumerable branches. The Vedanta philosophy embraces them all. And it is not only a philosophy, but also a religion, because it gives the fundamental principle of all unsectarian religions and includes all the sectarian religions of the world. Christianity is a sectarian religion. So is Mohammedanism. So is Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Hinduism. But Vedantism gives the fundamental principles of all religions. And yet it has a

philosophy and embraces all scientific truths. It is one with science, and absolutely logical and rational. Therefore, we must consider Vedanta as the system which teaches the harmony that exists between science, logic, philosophy, metaphysics and religion.

It is a system of philosophy, yet it is a religion. What is the difference between religion and philosophy ? Philosophy gives the theoretical side of religion and religion gives the practical side of philosophy. They both go together. First of all, we understand the theory, which clears away all the doubts and difficulties that arise in the mind and answers all the questions that disturb its peace, and then we are shown the way by which we can bring those ideals into our daily lives. Therefore Vedanta is almost practical. You can apply it in every action of your daily life, in your household duties, when you walk in the street, or dress, or eat, or perform any duties ; in your attitude towards your children and your brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, friends and relatives. You can spiritualize all these relations, if you understand the principles of Vedanta. Then you will be a true Vedantist. Then you will be a true Christian, a true follower of Christ, a true follower of all the great teachers and spiritual leaders of the world. It is a harmonious whole. And in this harmonious whole there is no room for jealousy, hatred or inharmony. Jealousy, hatred and inharmony, all proceed from ignorance, and they are all evils. They

are poisons. If you encourage jealousy, you create a poison in your system. One of the best physicians in New York City said, the other day, that a man or a woman who is extremely jealous creates a poison in his or her system that would kill twenty people. And it is a fact. So there is no room for jealousy.

All evil is on the negative side. There should not be any evil, if you always take the positive path. Send out currents of love, sympathy, harmony ; and every time you find any trace of inharmony or hatred, crush it out at once. Then you will have peace, you will emanate the vibrations of peace wherever you go, and you will attract all. Everybody will look at you and will find comfort in your presence. You will have to create the vibration in your own system first and radiate it. You will spiritualize your home. You will spiritualize the place where you work,—your office and every where. You will be able to make a crooked-minded person appear straight and simple in your presence. All his crookedness will disappear. A crook cannot be a crook in the presence of a saint. Why cannot you be a saint, and so reform all crooks? You do not need any police systems, reform systems. Live the life and set an example, and in your presence all the wicked will be changed.

There was a great saint in India who lived in an underground cave, in the garden of a temple adjacent to a town. The garden was surrounded by high walls. Fo

years and years he would not see anybody. In India there is a difference between real *Yogis* and those who pretend. Real *Yogis* hide themselves from the public. They are not like those we see here, who advertise and draw people through the newspapers. They hide themselves because they do not wish to be molested or disturbed. This great *Yogi* lived in this cave and would not come out for days. He would go without food and drink. But his presence in that neighbourhood created such reform that there was not one single burglary or theft committed in ten years. The police commissioner was put out of commission, and the police center was removed from that town because there was nothing for it to do. That shows that a spiritual man or a spiritual woman emanates spirituality which has the power to reform all those who come within his or her zone of consciousness.

There are zones of consciousness. You have a certain zone of which you are the center, and anyone who comes within your zone will be electrified, magnetized, spiritualized. Every magnet has a zone. As soon as a needle comes within the zone of the magnet it is drawn in. Remove it outside of that boundary, there is no action. So you have a zone around you, and anyone who comes in contact with you will be magnetized, spiritualized. But if your zone is narrow and limited to the atomic center in your brain, there is no hope of expanding, enlarging, strengthening by practice. But remember

that every individual soul possesses infinite powers, potentialities and possibilities, because we are all, as I said in the beginning, creators in miniature. We are infinitesimally small; yet when we think of ourselves as one with the Spirit we are infinite. There can be nothing greater than we. When we think of our bodies we are smaller than atoms, smaller than electrons. But when we think of ourselves as spirit, as divine, we are infinite, we are one with the Supreme Being. And that realization will make us rise above all fear, inharmony and disagreement, and will establish oneness with all the members of our community, all the members of different denominations, sects, religions, societies and so on. Then, and then alone, we shall be able to live a really spiritual life on earth, and the kingdom of heaven will be established upon this plane. First of all, we will have to establish the kingdom of heaven within us. Realize that God is within. Then you will realize that the kingdom of heaven can be established upon earth by our examples. We must set the example consciously, and towards that end we must struggle, keeping our minds open to truth, subject to correction, and earnestly striving with humility and sincerity towards that one goal, always sending out the current of love and forgiveness, the feeling of blessedness towards all. We must learn to bless all who curse us, to love all who hate us, to give all to those who deny us. And if we can do this, we shall be true students of Vedanta, and we shall

realize in time that perfection which Christ meant when he said, "Be ye perfect as the Father which is in heaven is perfect."

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Ques.—Swami, you said we should be harmonious with everybody. Now we might not hate a person but still we refrain from associating with him. Should we associate with him anyway ?

Ans.—No, you should not associate with everybody, but you should have kindly feelings towards all. For instance, we do not associate with tigers, but still we should know that there is God dwelling in the tiger, too; that we are one in spirit with the tiger ; that we are not greater than the tiger. We may not associate with him, but we may have the feeling of oneness at the same time. That is the answer which Ramakrishna gave to a disciple who asked the same question. You must see God in the tiger, but you do not have to live with him.

Ques.—Does the Swami think that sometimes the inharmony is only on the surface, that there is harmony in the mind, and for that reason we should use discrimination ?

Ans.—Yes, that is true. You should use discrimination. Of course you should not mix indiscriminately with everybody, because you may get into trouble. For instance, if there be a quarrel or fight in the street, you

should not stand there and be a looker-on. You might be dragged into it. So run away. Yet we know that there is God everywhere. We should use our judgment, because common sense is the best sense the Lord has given us. This common sense will develop into divine sense if we protect it from being crushed by the weight of ignorance and superstition. That is the best sense we have. Do not encourage anything that goes against common sense.

Ques.—What would be the best method of creating harmony in a society where there is faction and party feeling ?

Ans.—It is very difficult to tame human animals. We are all animals. It is easier to tame a tiger than a human being. The human mind goes in so many crooked ways. The nature of the lower animal is simpler. If anyone hates you, send a current of love. Pray for that person. Truth will triumph in the end. Nothing can hurt anyone who is standing for disinterested truth. Self-interest is the cause of all trouble. You will find that those who are trying to create inharmony have self-interest. We must learn to sacrifice our own personal opinions for the sake of the cause. Otherwise, no great work ever can be done. We individuals come and go, but we help towards the cause, That should be the ideal.

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